One Team, One Fight, One Organizational Identity...Or Not: The United States Air Force at a Turning Point

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MAJ. MICHAEL J. POWER

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COL. JEFFREY J. SMITH   (Date)

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HAROLD R. WINTON   (Date)

DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Michael Power was raised in an Air Force family and earned his commission as a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy in May 2001. After completing initial munitions and missile maintenance officer training, Major Power served in intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) maintenance, conventional munitions maintenance, aircraft maintenance, depot maintenance, and program management, primarily at the squadron level. He has served twice as an operations officer, in F-16 and MC-130W intermediate-level maintenance and in Minuteman III ICBM depot maintenance. Major Power has deployed twice, once to Andersen AFB, Guam as part of a Theater Security Package of F-16s, B-52s, and KC-135s, and for 13 months to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israel, as Aide-de-Camp to the U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Major Power is a distinguished graduate of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and the U.S. Air Force Advanced Maintenance and Munitions Officer School. Additionally, he is a Top Third graduate of Squadron Officer School. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Management from the U.S. Air Force Academy, a Master of Science in Human Resources Administration from Central Michigan University, and a Master of Military Studies (with Distinction) from Marine Corps University. Following graduation from the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Major Power will assume command of the 898th Munitions Squadron, Kirtland AFB, NM.

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ABSTRACT

The United States Air Force is in a constant search for its organizational identity. The occupation-based tribalism of the Service lends itself to multiple identities, while the lack of a common sense of what it means to be an Airman is at the root of the Air Force identity crisis. Organizational identity theory warns that multiple-identity organizations must be wary of developing an overall conflicted identity, which could lead to their dissolution. As the most dominant air, space, and cyberspace force in the history of the world, the U.S. Air Force must look both inward and outward through the lenses of identity, culture, and image to develop a more cohesive common organizational identity. Tribalism is not necessarily a negative force in the Air Force, and the Service's effective combat capabilities cannot be denied. Thus, the challenge for Air Force senior leaders is to develop a better organizational identity when it may seem as if nothing is wrong. The potential disequilibrium that may result through stagnation and a lack of critical self-diagnosis could lead to a less effective Air Force. While a common organizational identity for all Airmen may not be feasible, the analysis of identity at different levels and breaking down of communications barriers among the tribes can improve greatly the entire Service and ultimately make it a more effective fighting organization.

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Chapter 1

Introduction:
The United States Air Force and Organizational Identity

The organization of men and machines into military forces does not necessarily mean that they are equipped and trained for the accomplishment, if necessary, of decisive action in war. For this, the discipline of a coherent body of thought appears to be indispensable.

-Eugene Emme

Why Looking at Air Force Organizational Identity is Important

The United States Air Force is the world's greatest air, space, and cyberspace force; but to remain so it must adapt and change to ensure relevancy. Though organizational identity may seem to be a sociological concept too ethereal for modern military leaders, it is not. To ensure the relevancy of the Service, Air Force leaders must constantly look both inward and outward to recognize the identity inherent in its Airmen. For the Air Force to move forward and remain successful, it must look at what its organizational identity has been, what it is, and what it should become.

Ensured relevancy for the Air Force must start with leadership. Leaders at all levels should be engaged and work every day to define what it means to be an Airman. Regardless of what direction the Nation and the Air Force take in the future, the senior uniformed and civilian leaders must take charge in establishing the internal and external identity of the Service; an informed knowledge of organizational identity theory is absolutely essential in implementing both analysis and change. As senior leaders consider the future posture of the Air Force, they must consider organizational identity and, in particular, the creation of a *common* organizational identity, without delay.

It is more critical now than ever before that the Air Force take a hard look at itself and its organizational identity. While the impending personnel drawdown and fiscal constraints are causing stress among Airmen and their families, it is also an exciting time in that the Air Force can define clearly the

role it will play in national defense in the coming years. In order to enhance its overall organizational identity, Air Force leaders must go back to the basics of defining what an Airman is, how the force should be organized, and what it will take to adapt and change for the future. The Air Force of tomorrow will be defined by the development of a proper organizational identity today.

Primary and Secondary Audience

The primary audience of this work is currently serving Air Force leaders of all ranks. While the pace of operations continues to quicken and revolutionary technology embeds itself in all processes, Air Force leaders must take time to think about the identity of the Service. Looking at what Airmen are and what they will be will spur senior leaders to consider what a common organizational identity means in the tribal organization of the Air Force. Officers and Senior Noncommissioned Officers (SNCOs) are in a unique position to affect change in the Air Force and must lead the discussions that will get to the core of Air Force organizational identity. These discussions will be the crucial foundation for the investigation and consideration of different approaches in understanding what the Air Force must do to remain relevant in the future.

A second audience is Airmen of all ranks currently serving in the Air Force. While it falls upon the senior leadership to implement organization-level change, all Air Force members can benefit from a study directed at where the Air Force has been and what it should consider in the future regarding a common organizational identity. Airmen from the lowest levels should understand better what values and missions the Air Force's early leaders emphasized and how those values and missions impact the force of today. General Mark Welsh III, the current Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), believes that Airmen must find out where they fit in the organization in relation to a simplified list of mission sets.[1] Thus, all Airmen should be involved in analyzing the Air Force and making recommendations concerning what its identity should consist of in the future.

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[1] See General Mark Welsh, "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power for America" (HQ USAF: 2013).

Fundamental Purpose of the Research

The fundamental purpose of this work is to analyze Air Force organizational identity in a concise but informed way so that senior Air Force leaders understand its importance. This will be done through studying different examples of organization identity theory and examining the Air Force of yesterday and today through these theories. The informed opinions of currently serving Air Force leaders builds further this analysis. The hope is that through an examination of sociological literature, history, speeches, and personal interviews, a picture will emerge of what makes up the organizational identity of the Air Force in a way that cogently informs decision makers.

Another purpose of this work is to start the conversation about major issues the Air Force will encounter in developing a common organizational identity. Though the foundational research shows clearly that Air Force is a multiple-identity organization, it is useful to examine what core organizational identity interest areas should be considered in the future. Though there is no simple answer, this research can begin the discussion and spawn new studies that will help as the Air Force assesses its own identity and works to maintain relevancy.

Research Results

This project shows that the Air Force does not have a common organizational identity and that it would be difficult to establish one due to the tribal nature of the organization. The inherent *clan culture* exhibited in different Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) and weapon systems pose great challenges to Air Force leaders, especially as it relates to organizational identity.[2] Though multiple-identity organizations can be managed and can be effective, the danger lies in allowing the organization to devolve into a *conflicted organizational identity* through failed leadership and inadaptability.[3] Air Force senior leaders

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[2] Jeffrey Kerr and John W. Slocum, Jr., "Managing Corporate Culture Through Reward Systems," *Academy of Management Executive* 1, no. 2 (May 1987), 99, and Jonathan Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity: Balancing the Internal and External Pressures of Image and Culture" (Master's Thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 24.

[3] Michael Diamond, *The Unconscious Life of Organizations: Interpreting Organizational Identity* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1993), 216.

must consider these identity theories in examining the future role of the Air Force in national defense and how the Service develops its personnel.

The research shows that the Air Force is a multiple-identity, tribal force but also that it has been effective overall. Thus, the challenge is for senior leaders to take time to address organizational identity issues in what may be deemed a highly successful organization. Hopefully, the concise nature of this project can provide a "jump off" point for senior leaders in implementing critical self-analysis of the Air Force and where the Service must focus in the future concerning organizational identity. Falling into the trap of stagnation and shying away from self-improvement and constant self-diagnosis could be the death knell of Air Force effectiveness.

Finally, this project shows that regardless of any steps senior leaders may take toward a common organizational identity, some critical areas for improvement and analysis will always exist. The discussion generated by a detailed study of core processes and the identity of Airmen is critical to the adaptability and success of the organization. Examining the individual identity of Airmen and the organizational identity of the Air Force will be never-ending, iterative processes.

Road Map of the Argument

This thesis begins with an analysis of organizational identity theory. This is necessary to inform the audience of the constructs that exist in sociology for individual, group, and organizational identity. It emphasizes the relationship between different identity levels and the foundation of identity theory in individual identity. Chapter 2 concludes with a study of the theory behind identity change, organizational culture and identity, and a brief synopsis of Colin Gray's ideas on strategic culture.

Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive analysis of the organizational identity of the United States Air Force including a historical perspective organized along Thornhill's cultural narratives, a look at what the Service has said it means to be an Airman, and a consideration of tribalism and force

development.[4] It also discusses why the Air Force may need a common organizational identity, and condenses communication inconsistencies from Air Force senior leaders through the years. Interwoven through the analysis in Chapter 3 are the views of several senior, active-duty Air Force leaders and one retired Air Force leader, all interviewed via telephone or e-mail by the author in February and March of 2014.

Chapter 4 proposes recommendations in developing a common organizational identity for the Air Force. It begins with an analysis of the Air Force through the Hatch and Schultz organizational dynamics model.[5] The chapter examines several focus areas involving identity, culture, and image, concluding with a discussion of whether airmindedness and learning cultures can be sustaining. Chapter 5 provides suggested areas for further organizational-identity research related to the Air Force and final thoughts on the way forward for the Service's identity.

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[4] See Paula G. Thornhill, "Over Not Through: The Search for a Strong, Unified Culture for America's Airmen" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2012).
[5] See Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," *Human Relations* 55, no. 8 (2002), 991.

Chapter 2

Individual, Group, and Organizational Identity Theory

Understanding requires theory; theory requires abstraction; and abstraction requires the simplification and ordering of reality....Obviously, the real world is one of blends, irrationalities, and incongruities: actual personalities, institutions, and beliefs do not fit into neat logical categories. Yet neat logical categories are necessary if man is to think profitably about the real world in which he lives and to derive from it lessons for broader application and use.

-Samuel P. Huntington

Organizations such as the United States Air Force rise and fall based on the soundness of their identity and how it is perceived both inside and outside the institution. Some theorists suggest that identity in organizations should be examined from the bottom up, starting with individuals because this approach enables a full understanding of any overall identity. Scrutinizing the Air Force in this manner requires a deep understanding of identity theory and the dynamics of individuals, groups, and organizations. Before conducting an analysis of Air Force identity, it is necessary to examine several different models that lead to determining organizational identity.

In this chapter, I will examine individual, group, and organizational identity using several different interpretations set forth by modern psychologists, management experts, and theorists. Next, I will describe how organizations can change their identities. Finally, I will briefly address the topics of organizational change culture and strategic culture, as defined by Edgar Schein and Colin Gray, respectively, and how these concepts relate to organizational identity. This baseline understanding of identity in organizations will enable a thorough examination of Air Force identity in the next chapter.

Individual Identity

To understand organizational identity, one must first understand individual, or personal identity. Individual identity is characterized by psychologists Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder as "individual social identity," identifying self in relation to other people and groups within a construct titled "social identity theory."[1] Understanding that all identity begins with the individual is critical in a building-block analysis of organizational identity. Individual social identity addresses the relationship of an individual to a group, which then leads to understanding group identities in relationship to organizations.[2] Within the scholarly writings, some suggest that understanding individual identity enables one to analyze group and organizational identity. The identity of the individual is the first cog in the machine of organizational identity—while the level of analysis may change, the issues of self and identity remain useful as context when the subject group becomes larger.[3]

Within individual social identity, Ashmore describes a partitioning of "we selves" and "me selves," describing oneself as a member of a collective group and as fulfilling a role, respectively. An example of a "we self" would be "I am an African American," whereas a "me self" example would be "I am a mother." In looking at "we selves" researchers regard defining oneself in terms of collective social groups as multidimensional, with much discussion as to what the applicable dimensions are, i.e., self-identification, values, private vs. public regard, ideology, etc. There is

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[1]Richard Ashmore, Lee Jussim, and David Wilder, eds., *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflcit Reduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 237.

[2] While Ashmore, et al., also describe the concept of "personal identity" as somewhat different than "individual social identity," I will focus on "individual social identity" in this thesis, as the line between the two concepts is difficult to distinguish—even for Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder. Individual social identity focuses on the notion of individuals' identities in relationship to group and organizational dynamics, thus having more applicability to the main purpose of this thesis paper (see Ashmore, 241 for a brief discussion of personal identity).

[3] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Resolution,* 3.

often difficulty in determining where identity begins and where different variables, such as causes and consequences, begin in the "we self" construct. Ashmore's analysis highlights the multifaceted nature of human relationships and individual social identity.[4]

Individual social identity, per Ashmore, et al., is characterized also by the "me self" partition. In this part of identity, individuals think of themselves in social roles, things that relate to "me."[5] Individuals tend to seek out successful fulfillment of a role in society. Generally, individuals are content with their identity when employed in a role and, correspondingly, they are not content when they do not fulfill a role. When individuals cannot fulfill a "me" role, they tend to seek out— sometimes regardless of the positive or negative consequences—a greater role in a group. This seeking out of a greater role in a group is based on the natural inclination for positive evaluation and potency.[6] Thus, in the Ashmore, et al., study, individual social identity consists of identification with both a collective social group and employment in a definitive social role.

As previously noted, individual identity provides an origin for the development of organizational identity. Michael Diamond discusses the development of individual identity in *The Unconscious Life of Organizations,* tying it directly to human infancy.[7] Referring to Erik Erikson, Diamond defines identity as "connot[ing] the resiliency of maintaining essential patterns in the process of change."[8] The relationship between an individual (infant) and an organization (parent) is the initial experience of organizational identity. In order to develop individual identities of their own, babies must feel secure and safe in

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[4] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity* 238-240.

[5] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity* 240.

[6] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity,* 240.

[7] Michael Diamond, *The Unconscious Life of Organizations: Interpreting Organizational Identity* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1993), 79.

[8] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations,* 79. Diamond here references Erik Erikson in *Insight and Responsibility*, 1964.

their parents' presence. In situations where infant needs for safety and security are unmet by the parent, an uneasy attachment between a baby and parents develops. This anxiety can compromises infants' efforts toward separation and individuation, frustrating independence and autonomy.[9]

Individual identity, according to Diamond, is encapsulated by the development of selfhood in a dialectical process of separation and individuation, differentiation and integration.[10] Humans develop their identities through being both intimate with one another and being separate from one another. When individuals take their personal identity and self-esteem into a group setting, establishing a separate identity while being part of the group is essential to emotional well-being.[11] All individuals start developing their own identities at birth, and the experiences, particularly with their parents or guardians, can determine their individual social identities as adults. Individual identity is immediately linked to group and organizational identity, with a human's first group or organization being his or her own family.

Individual identity is either enhanced or decremented through participation in a group. In *Group Processes,* Rupert Brown describes how individuals can "bask in [the] reflected glory" of group success and can consider themselves superior based on positive intergroup comparisons.[12] Norms, defined as tacit behaviors for how group members should act that originate from rules, are frames through which the world is interpreted; this interpretation directly affects individual identity development.[13] Brown implies that individual identity is so entwined with group identity that a common outcome drives all individuals involved,

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[9] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 80-81.

[10] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 81.

[11] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 94. This will be discussed in greater detail later in the Group Identity section.

[12] Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 312.

[13] Brown, *Group Processes,* 56, 59.

with the perception being that one's fate is bound up with those of others.[14] Thus, we can infer from Brown's observations that while individual identities form the basis of groups, the blurring of the line between individual and group identities is unavoidable when individuals adapt to a group's norms.

Individual identity is molded and sometimes sacrificed in adapting to a group. While I will cover this concept further in the next section when addressing group identity, Fineman and Gabriel present some salient points worth mentioning at this point. When an individual is forced by an organization to don a "mask" in playing a role not aligned with that individual's natural instinct, individual identity is molded for the sake of a smooth-running organization.[15] Organizations reward this type of behavior, offering its employees a share in its glamour and riches in exchange for a surrender of individual identity.[16]

Individuals may experience varying levels of success in an organization by the way in which they conform, rebel, or adapt their identities towards organizational goals according to Schein, who terms this phenomenon "creative individualism."[17] When individuals sacrifice their identity completely for an organization, removal from that organization can be akin to bereavement.[18] Thus, individual identity is both an internalized trait unique to that person, but also one that may be molded in relation to outside influences like that of an established group or organizational identity.

In summary, some literature suggests that individual identity as expressed through social-identity theory is the critical foundation in the formation of group and organizational identity. Unlike Schein, Brown

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[14] Brown, *Group Processes,* 63.
[15] Stephen Fineman and Yiannis Gabriel, *Experiencing Organizations* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 23.
[16] Fineman and Gabriel, *Experiencing Organizations*, 83.
[17] Fineman and Gabriel, *Experiencing Organizations*, 145.
[18] Fineman and Gabriel, *Experiencing Organizations,* 166.

argues that groups and organizations develop their own identities from the many individual identities within them. Brown boldly states, "there is no psychology of groups which is not essentially and entirely a psychology of individuals."[19] Interestingly, other literature suggests that individuals determine group and organizational identity, while some advocate that groups and organizations mold individuals. Thus, the importance of a detailed study of the reasons for different individual identities cannot be overestimated when analyzing organization and human relationships as a whole. As Ashmore states, "multiple and diverse lines of contemporary social science research and theory demonstrate that self and identity are central to the understanding of human thought, feeling, and action."[20]

Group Identity

When individuals form groups, group identities develop that may or may not be similar to the sum of the individual identities contained within them. The three characteristics of a group, as defined by Joseph Reitz, are two or more people who (1) interact with one another face-to-face, (2) share some common ideology, and (3) perceive their relationship as something special.[21] Further, in distinguishing simple interpersonal behavior from group behavior, Brown postulates that in group behavior (1) there is a presence or absence of at least two clearly identifiable social categories, (2) there is low or high variability between persons within each group in their attitudes or behavior, and (3) there is low or high variability in one person's attitudes and behavior towards other group members.[22] Brown refers to Henri Tajfel who describes all social behavior as lying on a continuum where at one end interaction is determined by group membership and intergroup relations, and at the other end

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[19] Brown, *Group Processes,* 4.

[20] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity,* 4.

[21] H. Joseph Reitz, *Behavior in Organizations*, 3rd ed. (Homewood, IL: Irwin, 1987), 267.

[22] Brown, *Group Processes,* 6.

personal characteristics and interpersonal relationships.[23] Group behavior, and thus group identity, still involves the actions of individuals and the influence of individual identities.[24]

In *Group Processes,* Brown describes the theorist Philip Zimbardo's theory of deindividuation and how it relates to the identity of groups themselves and the individuals within groups. Brown lists the three most important components of deindividuation as anonymity, diffused responsibility, and group size. According to Zimbardo, the psychological state of deindividuation involves "being in a large group which provides people a cloak of anonymity and diffuses personal responsibility for the consequences of one's actions."[25] This may lead to a loss of identity and a reduced concern for social evaluation. Zimbardo's main argument is that people's behavior will degenerate in crowd settings; thus, this affects group identity as a whole.[26] In large group settings, a group identity may develop in which "people's behavior is less self-regulated and more controlled by immediate cues and norms in the environment."[27]

Increasingly larger groups tend to perpetuate less self-attentive behavior in individuals. A study conducted in 1986 examined newspaper reports of lynch mobs, and found that in groups of over 1000, group identity molds individual identity and the groups became more prone to acts of atrocity. According to this study, a significant correlation exists between the size of the crowd and the level of gruesomeness in assaults on the lynching victims.[28] An important facet of Brown's deindividuation research is that, while the identities of individuals may be molded by a group, the individuals do not lose their identities. Individual identities still exist, even in the lynch mob scenario—the difference is that

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[23] Brown, *Group Processes,* 6-7.
[24] Brown, *Group Processes,* 358.
[25] Brown, *Group Processes,* 12.
[26] Brown, *Group Processes,* 12.
[27] Brown, *Group Processes,* 16.
[28] Brown, *Group Processes,* 16.

individuals in the group decide amongst themselves, often in the name of group pride, to mold their identity in a particular activity.[29] The salient point is that while individual identities often change within development of a group identity, the basis of understanding group action remains rooted in individual identities. Individual identity is then changed and often with a stronger sense of group social identity versus personal identity—thus, personal identity is changed, but not lost in a group setting.[30] Often, when the group identity matters to individuals, they will work harder than they would work on their own.[31]

To understand fully the concept of group identity, one must understand internal group dynamics and in particular the importance of member roles and status. Brown defines roles as "behavioral regularities or expectations associated with particular group members."[32] Status is more difficult to define—it concerns power and prestige in groups, normally tied to leadership influence.[33] Role differentiation facilitates the division of labor within a group and contributes to the formation of individual identities in a group setting. According to Brown, status differences affect expectations for group members' behavior and often turn out to be self-fulfilling.[34] Within this internal group construct, according to Ashmore, et al., humans over time have developed a "depersonalized trust," in which trust within a group's status hierarchy enables the successful functioning of the group.[35]

Within groups, decision making nearly always exhibits polarization—the collective view of the group is more extreme than the average of individual opinions in the same direction. As group decisions are one of the most visible aspects of group identity, it is important to

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[29] Brown, *Group Processes,* 17.
[30] Brown, *Group Processes,* 17, 20.
[31] Brown, *Group Processes,* 192.
[32] Brown, *Group Processes,* 120.
[33] Brown, *Group Processes,* 73.
[34] Brown, *Group Processes,* 120.
[35] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity,* 215.

recognize the three main theories presented by Brown regarding the tendency of polarization in group decisions. In social-comparison theory, polarization is caused by group members competing to endorse the most desirable viewpoints based on social values. In the persuasive arguments theory, on the other hand, the information exchange through discussion among group members is what drives the polarized decision. Finally, the social-identity approach produces polarization by conforming to ingroup norms in comparison to outgroup norms.[36] The concept of ingroups and outgroups is critical to understanding both group identity and its natural relationships with both individual and organizational identity.

According to Brown, ingroup bias is a key factor in cohesion and identity within a group and largely effects inter-group relations. Higher-status groups and equal-status groups have a high positive level of ingroup bias, while lower-status groups tend to favor the outgroup.[37] Thus, understanding the status of a group, whether it be dominant, average, or low, helps observers in determining the levels of bias within the group. In higher-status groups, individuals largely retain a strong individual social identity within the group, as self-esteem rises with pride in the group. Conversely, in lower-status groups individuals may leave the group to maintain a higher level of social identity.[38]

At times, categories of group identities may overlap; and usually a dominant group identity will emerge to ensure distinctiveness from outgroups.[39] As Ashmore explains, "strong ingroup identification is associated with meeting needs for secure inclusion (through similarity to the ingroup) and secure differentiation (through intergroup distinctions)."[40] Therefore, much of a group's distinctive identity is determined by its status and level of internal bias. Competition is created

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[36] Brown, *Group Processes,* 222.
[37] Brown, *Group Processes,* 324-325.
[38] Brown, *Group Processes,* 359.
[39] Brown, *Group Processes,* 359.
[40] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity,* 32.

by the evaluation that is attached to outcomes for the ingroup and outgroup, and a group cannot improve its position unless the outgroup is doing less well than the group.[41]

Group identity, developed through individual social identities, status, and levels of internal bias, is the foundation of determining differences among groups. Brown argues that, "because of [individuals'] presumed need for a positive self-concept, it follows that there will be a bias…to look for ways in which the ingroup can…be distinguished favorably from outgroups."[42] Tajfel calls this "the establishment of positive distinctiveness," a distinctiveness based on the identity of a group in comparison to others.[43] This distinctiveness often manifests itself in a "linguistic intergroup bias," in which even word use is biased positively toward ingroup members, rather than outgroup members.[44] The distinctiveness of group identities naturally creates boundaries that determine both the composition and function of groups.

While group identities are formed by its members, a natural adjunct to the developed identities are group boundaries. As organizational culture expert Edgar Schein offers,

> If a group is to function and develop, one of the most important areas for clear consensus is the perception of who is in the new group and who is out (or not in), and the criteria by which inclusionary decisions are made. New members cannot really function and concentrate on their primary task if they are insecure about their membership, and the group cannot maintain a good sense of itself if it does not have a way of defining itself and its boundaries.[45]

Schein goes on to explain that the group members develop the criteria for membership through interaction with one another, inspiring debates that

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[41] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity,* 24.
[42] Brown, *Group Processes,* 312.
[43] Brown, *Group Processes,* 312. From Tajfel, 1978, p. 83.
[44] Brown, *Group Processes,* 319-320.
[45] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 116.

ultimately form the norms establishing group identity.[46] As groups develop their identities and add new members, the main criterion in recruitment of members is "want[ing] someone who will fit in"—in other words, the identity of the group is partially defined by the careful recruitment of members.[47] In turn, individuals get a sense of identity from inclusion in the group.[48]

In summary, individual identities directly influence group identities, and the opposite is also true. As groups form identities, individual identities within them change depending on the status of the group. Ingroup bias correlates to the level of status and further develops what can be seen from the outside as the group identity. Groups become stronger or weaker, depending on status level, based on their ability to shape their ingroup and clearly identify their outgroup. Individuals who do not conform to the new identity may cease to exist in the new group.[49] As a group further develops its identity and formal design, it creates goals for itself and may grow into the next level of social unit--an organization.

Organizational Identity

As groups develop into organizations, they change significantly and so do their identities. Whereas groups, as previously mentioned, consist of two or more people with a few general characteristics, "an organizations can be defined as a social unit that has been deliberately designed to achieve some specific goals," according to Reitz.[50] Explained another way by Allison, "organizations are collections of human beings *arranged systematically* for harmonious or united action" (emphasis

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[46] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 116.
[47] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 117.
[48] Schein, *Organizational Culture*, 118.
[49] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 4th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 158.
[50] Reitz, *Behavior in Organizations,* 13.

added).[51] Organizations are more formally prescribed than groups and develop defined goals, both formal and operative, meaning they construct plans for success with measurable outcomes.[52]

As Smith suggests, "every organization's institutional identity revolves around what is variously called its *essence* or the beliefs of the *corps* around its *core*" (emphasis in original).[53] Riley sums up well the intricacy of organizational identity in saying that "[it] is, in fact, an incredibly complex, multi-faceted construction of recursive variables, shared understandings, feedback loops, and unique perspectives" at the organizational level.[54] Schein agrees with this, emphasizing that stability in group membership, a shared history, and consistency all contribute to organizational identity.[55] When a group first makes the transition to an organization, the organizational identity is based on initial assumptions made by the founding leaders. At this early stage, according to Schein, identity is quite strong as (1) the primary [identity] creators are still present, (2) the [identity] helps the organization define itself…and (3) many elements of the culture have been learned as defenses against anxiety as the organization struggles to build and maintain itself.[56]

A key attribute of organizational identity is that, as it develops, it makes the organization stronger both internally and in its relationships with other organizations. Vaill concluded that what he calls "high-performing systems" have a frequently appearing attribute of shared identity and purpose. He relates that, in successful organizations "[members] know why they exist and what they are trying to do….members have pictures in their heads that are strikingly

[51] Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 145.
[52] Reitz, *Behavior in Organizations,* 13.
[53] James M. Smith, *USAF Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the 21st Century* (USAF Academy, CO: USAF Institute for National Security Studies, 1998), 2.
[54] Jonathan Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity: Balancing the Internal and External Pressures of Image and Culture" (Master's Thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 2.
[55] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 17.
[56] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 292-293.

congruent."[57] This is consistent with Stuart Albert and David Whetten, who define organizational identity as that which is central, enduring, and distinctive about the character of an organization.[58] Some researchers debate the "enduring" aspect of organizational identity, specifically whether identity is static or dynamic.[59] Nontheless, such debate does not change the notion that organizations, like individuals and groups, must develop a distinctive identity to remain viable entities.

The Organizational Identity Dynamics Model (Figure 1) developed by Hatch and Schultz provides a useful construct for studying the dynamic process of organizational identity creation and evolution.[60] In this model, organizational identity exists in the middle of a dual-feedback loop between an externally-oriented understanding of the organization—labeled *image*—and its internally oriented understanding—labeled *culture*.[61]

Figure 1: The Organizational Identity Dynamics Model
Source: Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 991.

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[57] Peter Vaill, "The Purposing of High Performing Systems," *Organizational Dynamics* 11, no. 2 (Autumn 1982), 26.
[58] Stuart Albert and David A. Whetten, "Organizational Identity," in *Research in Organizational Behavior, Vol. 7,* eds. L.L. Cummings and B.M. Staw (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1985), 263-295.
[59] Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science* (1951; repr., as *Resolving Social Conflicts; and, Field Theory in Social Science*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1997).
[60] Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," *Human Relations* 55, no. 8 (2002), 991 and Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 10-11.
[61] Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 991.

Using this model, Riley says that, "Identity, therefore, is the answer to the question, 'Who are we as an organization?' and is derived from organizational processes that mirror our impressions of how others see us when reflected against the unwritten beliefs and assumptions of our organizational culture.[62]

In the loop of the model involving identity and image, the focus is on the organization's external environment and the relationships with external actors, often referred to as stakeholders.[63] Organizations, in developing their identity, must decide which stakeholders' opinions are most important and the urgency of the issues the stakeholders represent.[64] Some scholars also find utility in analyzing the identity-image link by taking time to clarify what an organization *is not* as a way of developing a distinctive identity.[65] Important also in this portion of the Hatch and Schultz model is the concept of *mirroring* explained by Brown as the asking of the question "What does the organization believe others think of the organization?"[66] As "organization members perceive the prestige of the organization as it externally perceived," this contributes to the development of an organizational identity.[67]

In the other half of their model, Hatch and Schultz argue that the constant flow of information between identity and culture highlight the psychological importance for organizations to believe that they are a

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[62] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 11.

[63] Susanne G. Scott and Vicki R. Lane, "A Stakeholder Approach to Organizational Identity," *Academy of Management Review* 25, no. 1 (2000), 44.

[64] Scott and Lane, "Stakeholder Approach to Organizational Identity," 47-50 and Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 13.

[65] Jamie Mullaney, "Like a Virgin: Temptation, Resistance, and the Construction of Identities Based on 'Not Doings', *Qualitative Sociology* 24, no. 1 (March 2001), 1-24. See also Kimberly D. Elsbach and C.B. Bhattacharya, "Defining Who You Are By What You're Not: Organizational Disidentification and The National Rifle Association," *Organizations Science* 12, no. 4 (July-August 2001), 393-413. Also Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 15.

[66] Tom J. Brown, et al. "Identity, Intended Image, Construed Image, and Reputation: An Interdisciplinary Framework and Suggested Terminology," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 34, no. 2 (2006), 99-106.

[67] Laura Illia and Francesco Lurati, "Stakeholder Perspectives on Organizational Identity: Searching for a Relationship Approach," *Corporate Reputation Review* 48, no. 4 (2006), 297.

reflection of the things they value.[68] According to Hatch and Schultz, "organizational members not only develop their identity in relation to what others say about them, but also in relation to who they perceive they are."[69] A possible concern with this half of the model lies in Robert Jervis's observations that general cognitive processes can cause misperception and that patterns of misperception can develop.[70] Despite this possible deviation, organizational identity is molded by expectations and reflections—the recursive process inherent in the Hatch and Schultz model enables this.[71]

Some organizations have multiple identities, a result of the development of cultural subdivisions, sometimes referred to as *tribes*.[72] In describing the challenges of solidifying organizational identity in an organization with many identities, Riley states, "what is sometimes lost in the discussions about organizations is that they are actually made up of individuals, who are each motivated by a unique combination of experiences, needs, and aspirations and who each make individual choices of what organizations to be a part of and how much of themselves to commit."[73] Thus, fault lines in identity can form among groups of like-minded people within organizations, creating internal tension in the organization.[74] The reward structures of organizations can greatly influence where the divisions in identity occur. Kerr and Slocum explain how a *clan culture* can develop in which "the individual's long-term commitment to the organization (loyalty) is exchanged for the

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[68] Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 1000 and Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 2.

[69] Hatch and Shultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 1000 and Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 17.

[70] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 8.

[71] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 17-18.

[72] Peg C. Neuhauser, *Tribal Warfare in Organizations* (New York, NY: Harper Business, 1990), 1.

[73] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 19-20.

[74] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 21.

organization's long-term commitment to the individual (security)."[75] The tribal or clan cultures inherent in a multiple-identity organization pose great challenges to leaders who seek to develop an organizational identity for the entire organization.[76] As organizational theory suggests, the dominant group identity in an organization will normally have the greatest influence and power.[77] Leaders must understand individual social identities and their origins in order to bond the organization in a cohesive identity.[78]

Another viewpoint of organizational identity worthy of examination is that expressed by Michael Diamond in his book *The Unconscious Life of Organizations.* Diamond defines organizational identity specifically as "the totality of repetitive patterns of individual behavior and interpersonal relationships that, when taken together, comprise the unacknowledged meaning of organizational life."[79] Diamond's analysis is predicated on the understanding that, if individuals truly understand organizational identity and its many facets, they can affect organizational change.[80] Similarly, organizational effectiveness can only be achieved when the unconscious psychological dimensions of organizational identity are fully understood.[81] In summarizing his interpretation of organizational identity, Diamond descibes it as "[a] framework for interpreting organizational feelings and experiences based upon self and other relations."[82]

In his analysis of organizational identity, Diamond outlines a concept he calls *conflicted organizational identities,* "most commonly

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[75] Jeffrey Kerr and John W. Slocum, Jr., "Managing Corporate Culture Through Reward Systems," *Academy of Management Executive* 1, no. 2 (May 1987), 99.

[76] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 24.

[77] Jeffrey J. Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force: Tracing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), 181.

[78] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 23-24.

[79] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.

[80] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.

[81] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 79.

[82] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 82.

found within rapidly transforming organizations…in which workers feel powerless."[83] A conflicted identity arises from a lack of clearly defined objectives, in reality a devolving of the organization—which is normally defined by formal objectives. As leaders fail to guide the members toward a semblance of planned change, anxieties take over and permeate throughout the organization.[84] As noted in the earlier discussion of multiple-identity organizations, in organizations with conflicted identities, leaders must understand individual and group-identity dynamics in order to develop a cohesive vision and enable organizational success.[85]

In addition to describing organizational life, other experts express organizational identity from an operational perspective focusing on what the identity is *for* in the long term. Warner Burke defines organizational identity as the organization's statement about how it will achieve its long-term mission and is dominant approach to business. Organizations that are built-to-last should have the capability to adapt to change quickly, but the "core and anchor" of identity should never change once established.[86] Organizational identity is something to which individuals can hold, allowing them to change behavior as necessary while maintaining the "personality of the organization."[87] Burke states that identity is "who we are as an organization—what we believe, want, and how we prefer to be seen by the outside world," particularly in how an organization conducts its daily business.[88]

In addition to expressing organizational identity as how the organization operates, experts also have defined organizational identity as who the organization interacts with in its daily business. In *The*

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[83] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 216.
[84] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 216-217.
[85] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 217.
[86] W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice,* 2d ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 282.
[87] Burke, *Organization Change,* 282.
[88] Burke, *Organization Change,* 239.

Challenge of Organizational Change, Kanter, Stein, and Jick describe organizational identity as lying "in the nature of the ties that organizations have with their key constituencies or stakeholders, and who these stakeholders are."[89] They describe organizations themselves as bundles of activity with boundaries placed around the activities to facilitate the management and coordination of business. These boundaries define organizational identity. External relationships and ways of conducting business are the two major factors that precipitate organizational identity formation.[90]

As organizational identity develops, a distinct character emerges; and the structure of organizations takes shape. As Gareth Morgan says in his landmark management book *Images of* Organization, successful organizations are species-like in their character. Distinctive characteristics in the form of configurations or patterns exist to deal with the organization's particular environment.[91] Like organisms in the natural world, a degree of hierarchical ordering typically emerges in organizations. According to Morgan, to be successful, this ordering must not be predesigned or imposed.[92] Daniel Kahneman suggests that these identity-based structures allow organizations to think more slowly and deeply than individuals through orderly procedures, thus harnessing organizational strength.[93]

In summary, a well-functioning organizational identity is the foundation for organizational success. Individual and group identities evolve into organizational identities as formal goals and objectives are developed. Organizations then use the newly formed identity to establish hierarchies and control measures to facilitate operational work in the

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[89] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Barry A. Stein, and Todd J. Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change: How Companies Experience It And Leaders Guide It* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992), 212.

[90] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change,* 212.

[91] Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 53.

[92] Morgan, *Images of Organization,* 118.

[93] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2011), 417-418.

outside world. Successful organizations possess organizational identities that are strong, yet adaptable even in the face of dramatic internal or external change.

Identity Change

After examining what identity is and what identity is not, a relevant question is, once formed, can identity be changed? The short answer is yes, but it is not as simple as behavioral change. Altering the anchor of an organization and what individuals cling to involves much more than a process change. Changing the identity of an organization, while difficult, is possible.[94] According to Kanter, to change organizational identity stakeholder relationships must fundamentally change.[95]

Complete identity change in an organization is a somewhat elusive idea, though identity changes are possible in modifying the organization's relationships to its environment.[96] Modest identity change is possible by altering the relationships with some stakeholders, and complete alteration of an organization's identity may be attempted through the severing or changing of all stakeholder relationships.[97] Because, as previously noted, organizations often possess multiple identities, it is possible to localize identity change within an organization. By focusing on environmental changes affecting one internal group, the result may be a partial organizational-identity change.[98]

Identity changes are distinct from simple organizational changes, possessing several unique characteristics. Kanter outlines three characteristics of organizational identity changes: 1) they generally involve formal contracts between stakeholders, and therefore have

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[94] Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder, *Social Identity,* 228.
[95] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 212.
[96] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 212.
[97] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 213.
[98] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 213.

significant legal aspects; 2) they may be highly public while they are in process, not just when the final results are announced to the public; and 3) the focus of identity changes is on tangible assets, such as buildings, machinery, or financial payments.[99] The careful management of changes in stakeholder relationships is critical in enacting identity changes. Organizations must guard against claiming an identity change has taken place before the individuals in the organization accept it.[100] When this happens, the multiple-identity construct is exacerbated.

Organizational identity changes may occur in both revolutionary and evolutionary ways. When there is an abrupt shift in the environment and organizational boundaries are redefined, a revolutionary change can take place. According to Kanter, these abrupt changes often happen in conjunction with altering of the viability of stakeholder ties or creation of potential for new ones. Revolutionary identity changes are sometimes reactive and sometimes proactive, when leaders determine swift change is needed to take advantage of opportunities, create public drama, and/or to show courageous leadership.[101] While revolutionary identity changes can be successful and are at times necessary, the restructuring inherent in mergers, acquisitions, and the like can also cause turmoil within an organization.[102]

It is possible for organizations to have a managed, evolutionary identity change. Understanding the individual and group identities within an organization is crucial for leaders to manage such a change. Such understanding can produce organizational success. As Kanter states, "organizations that endure over long stretches of time have changed their identities in the process, but gradually and smoothly, with so much continuity and 'naturalness' that they have not [even] had to

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[99] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 214.
[100] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 219.
[101] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 220.
[102] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 221.

alter their names."[103] Regardless of whether or not the identity changes are revolutionary or evolutionary, the changes in external relationships requires attention to the nature of internal relationships in the organization.[104]

In summary, identity change is possible, even in organizations with deeply entrenched values. *The key to successful identity change is management of both external and internal relationships within the organization.* Leaders cannot force identity change on an organization in the same way they force behavioral change or process change. With knowledge of individual and group identities within the construct of organizational identities, informed leaders can successfully affect overall organizational identity. Organizational identity changes are the foundation for organizational change and the concept of organizational change culture.

Organizational Identity and Organizational Change Culture

Understanding organizational identity and the concept of identity change enables leaders to use organizational identity as a lever for organizational culture change.[105] Reitz emphasizes the relevance of organizational change in stating, "even the largest and most powerful of organizations must change: no organization has sufficient control over its environment to escape the need to change."[106] Organizational culture, as defined by Schein, focuses on a "pattern of shared basic assumptions" in an organization, with the word *culture* in particular implying a level of structural stability in the organization.[107] Hatch asserts that identity

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[103] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 221.

[104] Kanter, Stein, and Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change*, 223.

[105] Andrea Casey, "Creating an Organizational Culture to Support Strategic Thinking," in "Exploring Strategic Thinking: Insights to Assess, Develop, and Retain Army Strategic Thinkers," eds. Heather Wolters, Anna Grome, and Ryan Hinds (Fort Belvoir, VA: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2013), 103.

[106] Reitz, *Behavior in Organizations,* 561.

[107] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 14, 17.

dynamics "incrementally change the organizational culture at its deepest levels, transforming basic assumptions about who they are as an organization and how they are going to work together toward newly defined goals."[108] Thus, changing the identity of an organization, and therewith the culture of an organization, means dealing with the foundational building blocks of an organization, its basic assumptions.

Because organizational identity is the unconscious foundation for organizational culture, helping members gain awareness of identity frees them up for strategically sound and productive organizational change.[109] According to Diamond:

> Organizational identity differs, most sharply, from organizational culture because of the prominent role of transference phenomena. The nature of emotional attachments and connectedness, or disconnectedness, is the footing of organizational life and the essence of organizational identity. The centrality of this emotional substructure is especially crucial when there is demand for organizational change and development.[110]

The emotional attachments and difficult-to-observe key interactions among members of an organization help construct an organization's identity.[111] Transference dynamics help explain these relationships and form the constructs that must be addressed and adjusted to implement successful organizational change.

Changes in organizations are accomplished by changing people or changing their environments.[112] Diamond describes three key relationships in what he calls transference dynamics that get to the core of how people relate to each other inside an organization and how these relationships can cause instability. The first is called the mirroring relationship. It consists of a leader (superordinate) who requires adoring

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[108] Casey, "Creating an Organizational Culture to Support Strategic Thinking," 107.

[109] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.

[110] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.

[111] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 78.

[112] Reitz, *Behavior in Organizations,* 586.

and admiring followers, followers (subordinates) who wish to be led by someone they can idealize. The basic assumption in this relationship is dependency, much like a parent to a child when overdependencies develop and a top-down or one-way information flow develops in the organization, the resulting framework will likely not cope well with change.[113]

The second type of relationship in transference dynamics is the alterego relationship. In this phenomenon, followers are in search of leaders who are essentially like them. "Group think" can become an organizational reality in this scenario, as recruitment of like-minded people with like-minded goals may perpetuate an absence of differences in personnel (homogeneity).[114] According to Diamond, these organizations resist change fiercely and develop into defensive organizations consisting of subcultures with rigid boundaries.[115] Their identities become completely homogenous, and organizational change is difficult if not impossible.

The final type of unstable organizational identity relationship described by Diamond is the persecutory relationship. This situation is characterized by scapegoating rituals and paranoid leaders; it constitutes an example of conflicted organizational identity.[116] In all of these types of relationships that define organizational identity, effective leadership and organizational resilience can help the organization adapt to change. Critical, reflective thinking, fostered by leaders, helps to perpetuate a culture of organizational resilience.[117]

According to Schein, in order for organizations to remain adaptive and able to deal with a complex, fast-paced, culturally diverse environment, organizations and their leaders must become perpetual

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[113] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 221-222.
[114] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 222-223.
[115] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 223.
[116] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 224.
[117] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 229.

learners. Because organizational identities and cultures are stabilizing forces, organizations face a paradox in trying to change these foundational assumptions and beliefs.[118] The learning organizations of the future must consist of proactive problem solvers and learners who focus on the process of learning and examine internal and external relationships.[119] Further, leaders must enable critical thinking, and learning organizations should have faith in their people.[120] Schein proposes that the most successful organizations will be those in which leaders encourage deep thinking and adaptability among all members.[121]

In summary, an understanding of organizational identity is essential in affecting successful organizational change. Within an organization, individuals must have awareness of the relationships between individual, group, and organizational identity to inform this change. Organizations successfully change by changing their people or their environment, informed by the understanding of organizational identity.

Colin Gray on Strategic Culture

The study of organizational identity overlaps in many instances with the study of organizational culture. In his book *Modern Strategy*, Gray devotes a chapter to "Strategic Culture as Context." Gray defines culture, specifically in security communities, as an overlapping of ideas and behavior, thus encompassing both identity and culture. He states, "all strategic behavior is cultural behavior" and that strategic culture as context "weaves together socialized humans and their world 'out there.'"[122] Gray quotes Raymond Williams, who says culture "is a

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[118] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 393.

[119] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 394-395.

[120] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 395-401. Schein describes several other attributes of learning organizations that are not addressed here for the sake of brevity.

[121] Schein, *Organizational Culture,* 418.

[122] Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 129.

description of a particular way of life which find expression in institutions and ordinary behavior."[123] Thus, Gray concludes that culture is ideals, the evidence of ideas, and behavior.[124]

The importance of Gray's construct of strategic culture as context is that it gets at the core of identity. Much like Diamond, who described identity as being based on interpersonal relationships within an organization, Gray says that strategic culture "is within us; we, our institutions, and our behavior are in the context."[125] He argues that organizations may have several strategic cultures and that culture can evolve over time—this echoes the discussion of multiple-identity organizations argued above.[126] Additionally, Gray examines how organizations hold true to their identities in a culturally shaped manner, even when they are performing unfamiliar tasks.[127] The enculturated organization has a solidified context, "that which weaves together" members of an organization.[128]

Human beings have no choice but to be strategically enculturated in their organizations.[129] As culture is tied to strategy, connecting political ends and military means, strategic culture itself can be contingently prescriptive.[130] In the case of dominant security communities, when organizations are forced to act in ways not consistent with their developed culture and behaviors, success is unlikely.[131] Strategic culture is thus a useful example of identity, provided as an example of how ideas and behavior create context for an organization.

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[123] Raymond Williams, as quote in Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 132.
[124] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 132.
[125] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 133.
[126] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 134.
[127] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 135.
[128] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 136.
[129] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 141.
[130] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 144.
[131] Gray, *Modern Strategy,* 145.

Conclusion

Organizational identity has its foundation in personal and group identity. As individuals form groups and, later, organizations, their identities develop according to institutional goals. While individual identities never completely disappear, the dialectic relationship between individual and organizational identities certainly affects them. When organizational identities become established, they are difficult but not impossible to change, with stakeholder relationships being the focal point of any change.

The importance of understanding organizational identity makes itself manifest in studying organizational culture and, in particular, organizational culture change. When organizations go through a culture change, it is imperative for all members to be aware of the foundation of that organization—its identity. As members study the individual, group, subculture, and organizational identities, they can make better decisions in adapting their organization for change. A lack of understanding in the concept of organizational identity through the lens of individual and group identity can doom organizations to failure as they attempt to adapt and change in the fast-paced world of the 21st Century.

Airmen in the United States Air Force must study organizational-identity theory as the Service seeks to remain relevant in the coming decades. Leaders should analyze the history of the Air Force's identity and conduct a thorough analysis of individual, group, and organization identity within the Service. Common cultural narratives in Air Force organizational identity should be noted, especially in reference to combat capability and success in the Service's history. These studies and analyses will serve to make the Air Force stronger and more capable in the future.

Chapter 3

Air Force Organizational Identity

Where are you going?
Which way should I go?
That depends on where you are going.
I don't know.
Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

-Lewis Carroll

Failure in the transmission of information from the desert back to Britain and on to the United States are typical of an ancient theme in military history: the reluctance of tribes, nations, and armed forces to learn except from their own experience.

-Vincent Orange

The United States Air Force, by far the youngest US military service at 67 years, does not have a common organizational identity. Throughout its history, the Air Force's identity has changed several times as different political realities changed its focus. Though Air Force leaders have attempted through the years to develop a slogan that would resonate with all Airmen and define the organization's identity, they have so far not succeeded yet. The tribalism and parochialism present in today's Air Force is a by-product of a hierarchical, reward-based personnel system that has not adapted to changes in mission focus. The dangers inherent in not adapting to change are that the Air Force may move from a being multiple-identity organization to becoming a conflicted-identity organization with significantly less effectiveness and relevance than it now possesses.

This chapter will survey the history of Air Force organizational identity, using Brig Gen (retired) Paula Thornhill's "Over Not Through"

analysis of the Service as a template.[1] Next, the idea of what it means to be an Airman is examined, followed by an analysis of the inherent tribalism in the Air Force based on its force development construct. The analysis then examines communication inconsistencies in mission and vision statements from senior Air Force leaders. Finally, the modern Air Force will be examined through the Hatch and Schultz Organizational Dynamics Model to show the status of a common organizational identity in the Service.

History of Air Force Identity

The United States Air Force began its organizational identity journey in 1903 when the Wright Brothers first "slipped the surly bonds of earth."[2] In the century since, the Air Force has gone through many different perturbations of its primary focus, its organization, and its role in contributing to the defense of the nation.[3] Carl Builder suggested that Air Force leaders, mostly pilots, allowed themselves to become enamored with the means (the airplane), rather than the ends (war), which produced a lack of a common organizational identity.[4] Whatever the reasons, the lack of a "common cultural narrative" has created an Air Force that struggles identifying itself in a common, easily understood way.[5] Analyzing how the Air Force has grown and developed with regards to personnel and weapon systems, while at the same time not developing a common core organizational identity, is worthy of review.

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[1] Paula G. Thornhill, "Over Not Through: The Search for a Strong, Unified Culture for America's Airmen" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2012).

[2] John Gillespie Magee, Jr., *High Flight*.

[3] The air arm of the United States military has gone through many name changes since the early 1900s, to include that of Aeronautical Division of the Signal Corps, the Air Service, the Army Air Corps, the Army Air Forces, and perhaps others. For the sake of uniformity, this essay will use the term Air Force or United States Air Force throughout, except in specific instances where it is important to describe the Air Force as it was in a specific historical period.

[4] Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 31.

[5] Paula G. Thornhill, "Over Not Through: The Search for a Strong, Unified Culture for America's Airmen" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2012), 2.

Airmen have always struggled to obtain a common organizational identity, and much of this may come from the simple fact that the service is still so new compared to the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. While soldiers and sailors have had generations of theorists and scholars to help develop identities for their respective services, some believe the Air Force does not have a clear, complete set of ideas or goals that forge its essence.[6] There is much less written about airpower history and theory than there is about war in other domains.[7] In the 1920s, Airmen at the Air Corps Tactical School sought to define airpower. They aspired to emphasize its influence on national security as a way of putting Airmen and airpower at the forefront of defense, suggesting, "the air power of a nation is its capacity to conduct air operations; specifically, the power which a nation is capable of exerting by means of its air forces…Air power is measured by the immediate ability of a nation to engage effectively in air warfare."[8] This linking of national power and air power was crucial in the arguments for an independent United States Air Force—later, airpower leaders emphasized that *the Air Force was synonymous with airpower.*[9]

Several authors have dissected the history of the United States Air Force, dividing it into distinct periods or narratives that help examine the evolution of identity in the organization. Thornhill describes five distinct cultural narratives relating to Air Force organizational identity: 1) "Over Not Through" (World War I and Its Immediate Aftermath, 2) "Give Me Liberty" (the Interwar Years), 3) "Victory Through Air Power" (World War II and the 1990s), 4) "Peace is Our Profession" (the Cold War), and 5) "We Are Critical Enablers" (Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi

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[6] Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force 1907-1960,* vol. 1 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989), 1.

[7] Colonel Dennis M. Drew, "The American Airpower Doctrine Dilemma," in *Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect: Essays on War Airpower, and Military Education* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2008), 61.

[8] Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 437-438.

[9] Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 440.

Freedom).[10] This changing role of the Air Force in different periods, expressed through different narratives, serves as the historical foundation for the organizational identity of the United States Air Force. As noted in Chapter 2, organizations change and develop their identities over time as they adapt to internal and external changes, and different identities may even exist and overlap at the same time. This is certainly true of the United States Air Force.

Thornhill identifies the "over not through" cultural narrative as the earliest Air Force organizational identity, in the years immediately preceeding, during, and following World War I. Airmen took a new technology, the airplane, and through adaptation and innovation turned it into an offensive war machine. They focused on the development of operations and strategy, using airpower as an element of national security.[11] Coming out of World War I, Airmen identified two key aspects of airpower that would influence the identity of the Air Force—the primacy of the offense and the devastation of the hostile population's will. These ideas served as the initial foundation of airpower thought for the ensuing decades and would greatly influence the organizational structure and identity of the developing Air Force.[12]

Liberating military airpower from the ground-centric and ground support perspective was the difficult task of many Army aviation leaders, as aviation continued to be employed subordinate to ground commanders.[13] Army ground leaders emerged victorious when the Bolling Report in 1917 put independent bombardment units behind close air support platforms for the infantry, in order of developmental

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[10] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 10. For an analysis of Air Force culture and identity divided into periodic analyses, see *Tomorrow's Air Force: Tracing the Past, Shaping the Future*, Jeffrey J. Smith, Indiana University Press, 2014. Smith divides Air Force history into 3 historical periods--1907-1947, 1947-1992, and 1992-2030. See Appendix A for graphic depictions of these periods and the cultural changes in each.

[11] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 3.

[12] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 47.

[13] Jeffrey J. Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force: Tracing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Indiana University Press, 2014), 12 and David E. Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army 1917-1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 47.

priority.[14] The importance of developing an organization with a common identity became an issue during this time, as the Italian theorist Douhet stated, "before forging an air arm, we must first know what we intend to do with it and how to use it."[15] It was a difficult period in aviation, due to preoccupations with funding and keeping the organization alive in an era during which one fourth of officers died in training.[16] There was also much debate as to what the personnel composition of the Air Force would be. "During those early days, a great many Air Corps officers had the idea that everybody in the Air Force should be a pilot, regardless of whether he was running a hotel, a bus line, taking charge of motor transportation, or planning a hydroponics garden for the Pacific."[17] The Air Force had to find its focus and why it should organize in a specific manner.

The interwar years brought the institutional beginning of the modern United States Air Force, as military aviation entered the "give me liberty" cultural-narrative phase.[18] In the National Defense Act of 1920, the Air Service "became a combatant arm on a more or less equal footing with the infantry, cavalry, and field artillery."[19] Billy Mitchell stepped forward as the most notable prophet of airpower in the interwar years, and denigrating the Army and Navy, suggested in 1925 that, "even if hostile armies and navies come into contact with each other, they are helpless now unless they can obtain and hold military supremacy in the

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[14] Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers*, 49.

[15] Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air* (1928; repr., Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 69. As Michael J. Eula stated in *Air University Review,* "The Italian General Giulio Douhet reigns as one of the twentieth century's foremost strategic air power theorists. Along with William "Billy" Mitchell, Douhet understood the technological advances in weaponry made during World War I were not fully utilized by Allied commanders. Douhet thus spend the decade after the war constructing a theory that would facilitate the strategic use of what he conceived to be the biggest technological breakthrough of all, the airplane. As such scholars as Raymond Flugel have pointed out, Douhet's theories were crucial at a pivotal pre-World War II Army Air Force institution, the Air Corps Tactical School."

[16] Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Airpower: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 10 and Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 42.

[17] H.H. Arnold and Ira C. Eaker, *The Army Flyer* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 292.

[18] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 4.

[19] Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers*, 53.

air."[20] In this period, the innovation of Airmen was the second priority after the creation of an independent air arm which Mitchell envisioned as an "independent cavalry…to carry the war well into the enemy's country."[21] Thus, the Air Force strayed in how it identified itself, focusing its efforts on independence as a means of achieving a status in which it could focus on innovation.[22] The outward image was that of the romantic—a pilot in a dogfight against the enemy, while the internal culture began to focus on development of aircraft and airpower doctrine centered on strategic bombardment. In fact, "bombardment and autonomy were so inextricably bound together that the questioning of bombardment by an Air Corps officer was not only impolitic but unwise."[23]

In World War II, airpower was deemed successful by many in utilizing strategic bombing to achieve victory. This "victory through air power" narrative emphasized the singular role of strategic bombing in breaking the enemy's will. The efforts of the Air Force in WWII showed many people, particularly those in the military, that airpower could affect the conduct and character of warfare.[24] Though official analysis has shown that strategic bombing in World War II did not prove decisive in either major theater, the cause for Air Force independence was won in the public mind by the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[25] The United States War and Navy Departments oriented

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[20] William "Billy" Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power— Economic and* Military (1925; repr., Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2009), 122.

[21] Major Mitchell to Chief of Staff, U.S. Expeditionary Forces, memorandum, n.d. [June 1917] in Maurer, *U.S. Air Service in World War I,* 2:111.

[22] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 4.

[23] Perry McCoy Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace 1943-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 22, 23.

[24] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 4-5.

[25] The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Summary Report (Pacific War)* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946) and The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Summary Report (European War)*, 1945 in The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Vol. 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1976).

themselves toward air weapons, spurring an "equal and coordinate position for a third establishment," the Air Force.[26]

As the Air Force matured into an effective fighting force before and during World War II and Airmen made the case for institutional independency, organizational identity became even more important. General H.H. Arnold, Commanding General US Army Air Forces laid out ten principles for [U.S] air force operations at the end of World War II:

1. The main job of the Air Force is bombardment
2. Planes must be capable to function under all weather conditions
3. Daylight operations, including daylight bombing, are essential to success, for it is the only way to get precision bombing. We must operate with a precision bombsight—and by daylight—realizing full well that we will have to come to a decisive combat with the enemy air force
4. Must have highly trained and developed crews working together as a team—maintenance and in the air
5. Must carry out strategic precision bombing to key targets deep in enemy territory, such as airplane factories, oil refineries, steel mills, aluminum plants, submarine pens, navy yards, etc.
6. In addition to bombing, we must carry out tactical operations in cooperation with ground troops. For that we must have fighters, dive and light bombers for attacking enemy airfields, communication centers, motor convoys, and troops
7. Fighter airplanes must protect all types of bombing operations
8. Our Air Force must be ready for combined operations with ground forces and the Navy
9. We must maintain our research and development programs in order to have the newest equipment as soon as possible
10. Air power is not airplanes alone. Air power is a composite of airplanes, crews, maintenance,

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[26] The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Summary Report (Pacific War)* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 32.

bases, supply, and sufficient replacements in both planes and crews to maintain a constant fighting strength, regardless of what losses may be inflicted by the enemy. In addition to that, we must have the backing of a large aircraft industry in the United States to provide all kinds of equipment, and a large training establishment that can furnish the personnel when called upon[27]

Arnold envisioned an Air Force with a strong common organizational identity focused on air power and the development of a strong team to ensure proper application of strategic bombardment. Arnold proposed as early as 1941 that, "it may well be that eventually air forces of all countries will be separated from land and sea forces for the same reason that sea and land forces were separated more than a century ago. There is as much diversity in equipment, strategy, technique and leadership between the air and land or sea operations as between land and sea fighting."[28]

The destructive nature of airpower through the use of atomic weapons was obvious, and the Air Force achieved its independence by arguing that airpower in the nuclear era could be wielded decisively.[29] Additionally, Arnold placed great importance on the role of technology, working to forge a "permanent alliance of officers and scientists" to enable continued growth and development.[30] To ensure the harnessing of technology, Arnold created a permanent scientific advisory board.[31] The Air Force identity reflected the achievements of World War II, as bomber pilots dominated the leadership positions and strategic bombing became the main focus of the independent, nuclear-focused United States Air

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[27] Arnold and Eaker, *The Army Flyer*, 3-4.

[28] James Parton, "The Thirty-One Year Gestation of the Independent USAF," Aerospace Historian 34, no. 3 (Fall/September 1987): 154.

[29] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 32.

[30] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 171.

[31] Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War: Bernard Schriever and The Ultimate Weapon* (New York: Random House, 2009), 126.

Force.[32] Even after the overwhelming success of the Berlin Airlift, the air mobility mission remained secondary, as the dominant focus was on nuclear bombing.[33]

Shortly after adopting an organizational identity centered on Strategic Air Command (SAC), the Air Force found itself in a limited war in Korea and later faced a limited war in Vietnam. As Smith states,

> This conflict regarding the proper use of heavy bombers, weighed against the real-time requirement for tactical capabilities, suggests that the external pressures encountered in the early stages of the [Korean War] required flexibility and diversion from the USAF standard operating procedures—a flexibility the USAF bomber community was reluctant to offer. It appears that the external exigency of a limited, politically constrained war did not balance with the internal bomber-operations culture that dominated the USAF at the beginning of the war...[this] emerging disequilibrium between the organizational dominance of bomber operations and the external requirements for tactical capabilities brought about the first measurable sign of organizational conflict in the newly formed USAF. Unfortunately, this was not the last challenge the USAF would face due to the discrepancy between their bomber-operations perspective and combat tactical requirements.[34]

The importance of air and land forces operating in coordination with one another was lost on an Air Force that was still young and intent on keeping its independence through a deliberate focus on the unique capability of decisive strategic bombardment.

Another cultural narrative highlighted by Thornhill is the "peace is our profession" Air Force identity of the Cold War. In the wake of the 1945 atomic bombing of Japan, the Air Force became focused on deterring future nuclear conflict. Built around the Strategic Air

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[32] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 61.

[33] James M. Smith, "Air Force Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air Force for the Twenty-First Century," *Airpower Journal*, Fall 1998, 42.

[34] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 65.

Command (SAC) with its demanding leader, General Curtis LeMay, the post-WWII Air Force lost much of its innovation as it adopted a checklist mentality and set perfection as its standard. Thus, "compliance-driven mission competence [ended up overshadowing] innovation" throughout the Air Force.[35] The identity of the Air Force in this era was conflicted, as tribes developed among Airmen and "the absence of an integrating vision unleashe[d] bad tendencies: weak ties to the [overall] institution, loyalties given to airframes or commands, and a focus on systems before missions."[36] During this period, the image of the Air Force presented to the nation was one of a highly-skilled force focused on nuclear deterrence. General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, the second Chief of Staff of the Air Force, artfully conveyed the narrative that Air Force airpower was the basis of US national security. As the Cold War raged on, Congress thus directed roughly half of all spending toward the Air Force—the dominant service had adopted a dominant identity of competence before innovation.[37]

In the geopolitical environment of the 1950s and 1960s, the United States demanded a deterrence-based posture, and SAC provided "deterrence through air power as the basis for national security in the Cold War."[38] The "budget spigots were open and the USAF was at the top of the budget list."[39] As SAC became the most respected military force in the world, with some saying "SAC *was* the Air Force."[40] Builder argues that during this period, the identity of the Air Force changed dramatically

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[35] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 6.

[36] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 6. Though Builder here is summarizing *A View of the Air Force Today* from 1989, this particular quote is useful in looking at the Air Force in the post-WWII era, as SAC dominated the culture and innovation declined in the majority of the force. Of note, Thornhill disagrees that a lack of innovation was present throughout the Air Force, as the engineers and space professionals under Gen Bernard Schriever did innovate and bring to fruition the technology for ICBMs and the space program (see Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 6).

[37] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 149.

[38] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 145.

[39] Michael P. Geranis, "Building on Builder: The Persistent *Icarus Syndrome* at Twenty Years" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2013), 29.

[40] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 146.

as Airmen focused more on the means of their mission—the airplane—rather than the ends, a phenomenon that still remains.[41] To compound the problem, the SAC-dominated Air Force allowed the visionary thinking of the early leaders such as Hap Arnold to atrophy, as the service outsourced strategic thinking to think tanks and academia.[42]

A major challenge to Air Force organizational identity came in the form of the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) in the late 1950s. Airmen, who identified with aircraft, specifically the bomber, did not embrace the new technology because,

> The bomber was the central focus of identification within the Air Force. To conceive of a new weapon that might someday perform its primary task much more efficiently would require a great restructuring of beliefs…The normal reaction is to reject the disturbing new element. The Air Force's behavior in the early days of the ICBM followed this pattern…Since the Air Force officers not only understood bombers and knew they worked but often equated their own personal usefulness and well-being with that weapon it is not surprising that long range supersonic missiles were placed even further into the future.[43]

Ironically, though General Arnold had exhibited "great enthusiasm" for ICBMs, subsequent Air Force leaders deliberately slowed ICBM development and placed little faith in the new technology.[44] Senior Air Force leaders wanted Air Force identity tied to airplanes, not missiles. Again, Air Force identity and culture were tied to hardware, even as the force presented an image to the outside world as a dedicated, professional Service capable of winning the Nation's wars.

The Air Force eventually accepted missiles because it became apparent that effective nuclear deterrence required their inclusion. After

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41 Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 146-147.
42 Geranis, "Building on Builder," 51.
43 Edmund Beard, *Developing the ICBM: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 229-230.
44 Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 171.

pushing hard for the Mach 3 B-70 Valkyrie, which was later cancelled, the Air Force accepted that "the Soviet's ability to defeat an incoming missile proved next to impossible" and accepted the ICBM mission even if, as a whole, the service still identified itself through its airplanes.[45] Even the idea of cruise missiles delivered by heavy, manned bombers from a stand-off distance did not stop one SAC Colonel from insisting that "SAC was not about to abandon its intention to fly over the targets, open the bomb-bay doors, and watch the bombs fall until they detonated."[46] In the early 1960s, Secretary of the Air Force Eugene Zuckert explained "to try to change the culture of an organization that had been the dominant defense organization throughout the 1950s was not easy."[47] Thus, the organizational identity of the Air Force was conflicted during this period, as the Air Force neglected the adaptability, agility and important ideas that could have given the institution cohesive purpose and energy.[48]

In the Vietnam War and the era after Vietnam leading up to Desert Storm, the Air Force went through a period that would later be called "The Rise of the Fighter Generals."[49] SAC leadership was adamantly against the idea of using bombers to drop conventional weapons in Vietnam, proclaiming that they wanted to remain solely in the "nuclear business."[50] The advent of precision-guided munitions (PGMs) put fighter pilots in the business of strategic attack for the first time, and this development, combined with the defiance of the bomber generals, enabled the rise of fighter pilots to the leadership positions of the Air

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[45] Geranis, "Building on Builder," 36.

[46] Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 42.

[47] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force,* 77.

[48] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 34-36.

[49] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air* Force, 80. For an in-depth book length analysis of this period, see Michael R. Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problems of Air Force Leadership 1945-1982* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1998),

[50] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force,* 78.

Force. Then-Colonel Mike Worden explains the cultural transformation during this period:

> The insularity and narrow doctrinal focus of SAC on its all-important mission, coupled with the rigid discipline and centralized control demanded by that mission, hampered the dominant bomber generals' ability to contend with the realities of limited war in Vietnam…the absolutists remained convinced of the efficacy of manned strategic bombers (despite new technologies) and assumed a national willingness to use atomic weapons that exceeded political realities…More pragmatic views that considered airpower a decisive element in joint warfare prevailed more often with the previously subordinated fighter community. While they too believed in the massive use of airpower, they possessed better equipment for the complex challenges of limited war in the Vietnam era.[51]

In the 1990s, Desert Storm and Kosovo demonstrated the effective use of precision air attacks, and Airmen believed these "offered innovative, unique, and decisive solutions to national problems by reimagining war's character and conduct."[52] As in WWII, many deemed airpower successful, and the identity that emerged from the campaigns of this period was an Air Force dominated by fighters, some bombers, and precision weapons. The Air Force, perhaps the "most sensitive [service] [in] defending or guarding its legitimacy as an independent institution," once again adopted a narrative of strategic bombardment being the prime answer to conflict.[53] It was not, however, a flexible organization skilled in a variety of missions and capable of adaptation based on changing political goals. These deficiencies became important later in the irregular wars of the early 2000s.[54]

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[51] Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 236.
[52] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 5.
[53] Builder, *Masks of War*, 27.
[54] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air* Force, 129.

Though the Air Force was successful in Desert Storm and subsequent conflicts, the lack of a clear organizational identity and a focus on means rather than ends still bedeviled the service. Gen Merrill McPeak, the Air Force Chief of Staff during Desert Storm and the ensuing peace dividend drawdown, addressed the issue of finding a cohesive mission for the Air Force at a formal dinner at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, on 19 June 1992. Gen McPeak stated that when asking Airmen about the mission of the Air Force,

> [We'd] not likely get an answer that goes back to a fundamental Air Force mission, to an underlying institutional purpose. This observation is not intended as a criticism. After all, as I say, strictly speaking, we have never been given a clear statement of the mission. So it is entirely understandable that at the Air Force level, we talk about organizing, training, and equipping—critical functions but not a mission. At wing level, we talk about air superiority, close air support, interdiction, long range attack, airlift—critical roles or tasks but none of them so broad, so all-encompassing as to constitute a mission for the institution and all its people. This is a very important omission—no pun intended.[55]

The General then went on to propose a simple mission statement, offering,

> *Our mission—the job of the forces we bring to the fight— is to defend the United States through control and exploitation of air and space.* There, it's said: To defend the United States through control and exploitation of air and space. Thirteen words. Not very startling. Maybe not very original. The central idea is to define our mission in terms of the medium in which we operate. We are airmen. We are concerned with operations in air and space. What we do may have a crucial—even decisive—impact on events at the earth's surface. But the mission is defined primarily by the fact that we operate in the air and in space, just as the missions of the Army and Navy are defined by the media in which they operate. Air and space control

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[55] Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990-1994*, (Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 1995), 153.

and exploitation is what we hope to achieve, to be able
to do.[56]

In the wake of Desert Storm and through the airpower successes of the 1990s, the Air Force centered on the fighter pilot and fighter aircraft. Despite the emergence of limited conflicts such as Somalia, the Air Force continued to plan for another operation like Desert Storm, and organized the force around the fighter aircraft of Air Combat Command and the air superiority mission.[57] Organizations in the Air Force all the way down to the basic unit of operation, the squadron, reorganized to emphasize the focus on fighter operations. In 1992, SAC was disbanded.

The final Air Force identity described by Thornhill is the "we are critical enablers" cultural narrative indicative of the Air Force's involvement in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. This narrative is characterized by an identity developed from "provid[ing] essential and innovative support to the other Services but [not belonging] to a decisive military force that offer[s] unique solutions to strategic problems."[58] After initial successes in Afghanistan, the Air Force—still largely associating with a "victory through air power" identity[59]—failed to anticipate how its fighter-dominated structure and perspective would not fit well with the counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign about to take place. Instead, the Air Force "prepar[ed] for another strategic attack in Iraq."[60] Airmen who deployed as enablers of the other services often adopted the culture of those units, causing Thornhill to wonder, "did Airmen identify with the other Service cultures from a position of confidence in their own

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[56] Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990-1994*, (Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 1995), 155 (italics in original). Also, see Geranis, "Building on Builder," 63.
[57] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air* Force, 123-125.
[58] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 7.
[59] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 7.
[60] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air* Force, 135.

distinct culture, or did they turn to them because they sought a stronger cultural identity?"[61]

Builder, attempting to address the Air Force organizational identity as a whole, asked, "who is the Air Force? It is the keeper and wielder of the decisive instruments of war—the technological marvels of flight that have been adapted to war. What is it about? It is about ensuring the independence of those who fly and launch these machines to have and use them for what they are—the ultimate means for both the freedom of flight and the destruction of war."[62] Though writing in in the early 1990s, Builder's hypothesis that the neglect of air power theory causes many of the Air Force's institutional problems retains much validity.[63] Though the current Chief of Staff, General Mark Welsh III, has attempted to forge Air Force identity with his recent vision document, the history of the Air Force is one in which the organizational identity has been fractured into individual career fields and specialties. As the Air Force, perhaps more than the other services, tends toward occupationalism, the importance of an organizational identity is vital as the Service seeks to define itself in the current budget and force structure battles.[64] Whether the Air Force "worship[s] at the altar of technology" or whether it simply harnesses technology more prolifically than the other services, is still a matter of debate that demands examination.[65]

Why History is Important in Analyzing the Organizational Identity of the Service

The recounting of Air Force organizational identity through its development in the past century is important to remember as the Air Force moves forward. In the current era of personnel drawdowns and

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[61] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 7.
[62] Builder, *Masks of War*, 33.
[63] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, xviii.
[64] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 8. Quoting from "A View of the Air Force Today" (1989).
[65] Builder, *Masks of War*, 19.

fiscal constraints, the Air Force must look inside itself and decide which culture, identity, and image it will embrace in the coming decades. As CSAF General Ronald Fogleman said in 1997, "We have neither the option nor the interest to keep things as they are...we must adapt...we must undergo a cultural change in our institution, attainable only by matching the insight and energy of those who came before us."[66] Thornhill concludes that the "over not through" cultural narrative is the correct path for the future and may be the construct for "[imbuing] all Airmen with a unifying cultural identity that captures their value and place in a dynamic national security arena."[67] Whatever the narrative is that will identify the organizational identity of the Air Force in the coming decades, one must not forget the brief and turbulent history of the Service in examining how an organization that has never truly had a common organizational identity can approach developing one. And it must all start with the identity of the individual Airman.

What does it mean to be an Airman?

As noted in Chapter 2, individual identity is the foundation of all organizational identity. Thus in analyzing an organization, it is prudent to start with the individual and what he or she exhibits regarding culture, identity, and image. The United States Air Force defines Airmen as both military and civilian, those who "support and defend the Constitution of the United States and live by the Air Force core values."[68] Though not the focus of this work, including civilians under the definition of "Airmen" is unique among the military services and may require reconsideration as the Air Force examines a move toward a common organizational identity. If Airmen are considered both as those

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[66] RAND Project Air Force, *Report of the CSAF Blue Ribbon Commission on Organizational Evaluations and Awards*, 1997.
[67] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 8.
[68] Air Force Doctrine Document Volume 2, *Leadership,* 8 November 2011, 5.

in uniform and those out of uniform who support the Service, it may be more difficult to distinguish what makes an Airman special and unique.

Air Force leadership has always sought to distinguish Airmen as being different from members of the other military services, with questionable success. Billy Mitchell stated that, in developing the fledgling Air Force, "the greatest necessity exists for the creation of air personnel as distinguished from Army or Navy personnel."[69] The core values of the Air Force, which are meant to be internalized by every Airman, are integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.[70] Doctrine states that Airmen "recognize and value airpower" and "due to the distinctive nature of the capabilities brought to the fight [by airpower], Airmen see their Service as unique."[71] While this is the ideal espoused by doctrinal documents, it is apparent in interviews with senior Air Force leaders that the Air Force does not have a simple but meaningful phrase of defining an Airman.

In determining what the identity of an individual Airman should be, it is important to understand the complex nature of airpower, which the US Air Force defines as "the ability to project military power or influence through the control and exploitation of air, space, and cyberspace to achieve strategic, operational, or tactical objectives."[72] As Air Force doctrine states, "airpower is flexible in organization and presentation….[and] because it encompasses a wide range of capabilities and operating environments, it defies a single, general model for organization, planning, and employment."[73] Despite this nebulous definition, the Air Force believes there should be a military service made up of professional Airmen focused 100% everyday on airpower, to include

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[69] Mitchell, *Winged Defense,* 220-221.
[70] AFDD Vol 2, 16.
[71] AFDD Vol 2, 6.
[72] Air Force Doctrine Document Volume 1, *Basic Doctrine*, 4 October 2011, 11.
[73] AFDD Vol 1, *Basic Doctrine*, 62.

air, space, and cyberspace. As former CSAF General Ronald Fogleman relates,

> The other services have air arms—magnificent air arms—but their air arms must fit within their services, each with a fundamentally different focus. So those air arms, when in competition with the primary focus of their services, will often end up on the short end, where the priorities for resources may lead to shortfalls or decisions that are suboptimum. It is therefore important to understand the core competencies of [airpower] are optional for the other services. They can elect to play or not play in that arena. But if the nation is to remain capable and competent in air and space [sic], someone must pay attention across the whole spectrum; that is why there is a US Air Force.[74]

In interviews with several senior Air Force officers, a common theme emerges that what it means to be an Airman varies depending on whom one asks. Some senior officers argue that the Air Force mission statement of "Fly, Fight, Win…in Air, Space, and Cyberspace" does a disservice to how we define the role of the individual Airman, in that it tries to cover too much ground in one phrase. Many officers stated that by adding the term "cyberspace" to the mission statement, Airmen are then expected—as per the latest doctrine—to be able to apply airpower across another domain that is not necessarily taught or imbued in all Airmen. One senior officer made the case that "simpler is better" and as the term Airman is better defined, it must be about "how [Airmen] think about things instead of just what we do," while emphasizing that what Airmen bring to the fight is an ability to think in four dimensions, with a better view of the whole fight.[75] Air Force Airmen see the battlespace

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[74] AFDD Vol 1, *Basic Doctrine*, 11.
[75] Brig Gen Stephen A. Clark, USAF (Deputy Commanding General, Joint Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, NC), interview with the author, 12 February 2014.

strategically and offer solutions through the domains of air, space, and cyberspace, but the domains are not as important as the perspectives.[76]

While Air Force doctrine states that "each Airman should understand and be able to articulate the full potential and application of Air Force capabilities required to support the joint force and meet the nation's security requirements," some emphasize that an individual Airman by definition also has a specialty and level of expertise that defines his/her identity. Based on the technical nature and specializations of Airmen, an Airman has as part of one's individual identity "how to support or apply effects through air, space, *or* cyberspace."[77] This so-called "stovepiping" of expertise, evident in the service's force-development construct, will be assessed in the next section, but is important here to note that many Airmen may not possess a broad perspective of the Air Force's capabilities, though doctrine suggests they should. Recalling the "we self" and "me self" partitioning described by Ashmore, Airmen tend to associate themselves more with the "me self," or vocational identity, rather than the "we self" or professional identity of being an Airman. The challenge for leadership in affecting the identity of individual Airmen is in not allowing them to get lost in how they directly contribute to the overall effects airpower is intended to produce.[78] Applying Diamond to this concept, Airmen must establish a separate identity within a group to satisfy their emotional well-being, but this should ideally be linked to their unit and the Air Force as a whole to enhance both individual and organizational identity.[79]

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[76] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air* Force, 227.

[77] Col Houston Cantwell, 732d Operations Group Commander, Creech AFB, NV, to the author, e-mail, 9 Feb 14 (emphasis added).

[78] Maj Gen Timothy J. Leahy, USAF (Director of Operations, J-3, United States Special Operations Command), interview with the author, 10 Feb 14.

[79] Michael Diamond, *The Unconscious Life of Organizations: Interpreting Organizational Identity* (Westport, CT: Qorum Books, 1993), 94.

In other words, Airmen should ideally use published doctrine as a resource for merging their own personal identity with the core identity of the Air Force. As Frederick Baier says,

> Every Airman, from the newest airman basic to the most senior general, needs doctrine to fundamentally understand how he or she contributes to making our Air Force the best in the world. It tells us how to effectively and efficiently apply air and space power to help defend the nation and help it achieve its goals. Understand that your doctrine is the Airman's inheritance, passed down to us from Airmen before us. It is our warfighting legacy. *Doctrine tells us who we Airmen are and why our Air Force exists.* Doctrine is the distilled warfighting experience and thought of our Service's heroes, leaders, theorists, and scholars. But most importantly, it captures and crystallizes the warfighting lessons learned of everyday Airmen throughout our Service's history. Finally, we need to remember that it is our responsibility today to continually improve Air Force doctrine through experience and debate, so that we can pass down our best practices and our lessons learned to tomorrow's Airmen.[80]

In utilizing doctrine as the starting point for developing the identity of Airmen, Builder cautions "the root cause of the breakdown for the Air Force [is] the focus on flying and the love of airplanes over understanding the connections and implications in meeting the ends."[81] Air Force leaders have sought in recent years to build the identity of an Airman on the basis of the core values and what they stand for, as opposed to occupationalism and a focus on material assets. General Michael Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force from 1997-2001 suggested that,

> Core Values help those who join us to understand right from the outset what's expected of them. Equally important, they provide all of us, from [the rank of]

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[80] Frederick L. Baier, *50 More Questions Every Airman Can Answer* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, Air Force Doctrine Center, 2002), 17 and Geranis, "Building on Builder," 58-59 (emphasis added).

[81] As quoted in Geranis, "Building on Builder," 59.

Airman to four-star general, with a touchstone—a guide in our own conscience—to remind us of what we expect from ourselves. We have wonderful people in the Air Force. But we aren't perfect. Frequent reflection on the core values helps each of us refocus on the person we want to be and the example we want to set.[82]

Airmen should "truly believe in words like integrity, service, excellence—not as a 'bumper sticker,' but as a codified way of being a part of [the] team…they will not let their unit down."[83] As current Secretary of the Air Force Deborah James recently said, "Core values is not a program in the Air Force (sic), it's a way of life."[84]

In 2007, then-CSAF Gen T. Michael Moseley unveiled a new Airman's Creed for the Air Force as part of his vision—"the reinvigoration of rich Air Force warrior culture."[85] Though the process for developing the new creed, through multiple Pentagon e-mails and without prior buy-in from the Air Force at large, was somewhat arbitrary, the end result was an attempt to define more effectively what General Moseley called "The Airman *Warrior*" (emphasis added).[86] The creed reads,

<div style="text-align:center">

I am an American Airman.
I am a Warrior.
I have answered my Nation's call.

I am an American Airman.
My mission is to Fly, Fight, and Win.
I am faithful to a Proud Heritage,
A Tradition of Honor,
And a Legacy of Valor.

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[82] AFDD Vol 2, *Leadership*, 16.

[83] Maj Gen John B. Cooper, Director of Logistics, Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations, Logistics, and Mission Support, Pentagon, Arlington, VA, to the author, e-mail, 20 Feb 14.

[84] The Honorable Deborah Lee James, Secretary of the Air Force (address, Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium, Orlando, FL, 20 February 2014).

[85] Brig Gen William Chambers, "Returning the Air Force to Prominence in the National Security Arena: Strategic Communications Campaign" (working briefing, SAF/CM, December 2007).

[86] Jonathan Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity: Balancing the Internal and External Pressures of Image and Culture" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 69.

I am an American Airman.
Guardian of Freedom and Justice,
My Nation's Sword and Shield,
Its Sentry and Avenger.
I defend my Country with my Life.

I am an American Airman.
Wingman, Leader, Warrior.
I will never leave an Airman behind,
I will never falter,
And I will not fail.[87]

An important aspect of the implementing of the Airman's Creed was the simultaneous abolishment of several other creeds that had existed in the Air Force, including creeds for Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) and Senior Noncommissioned Officers (SNCOs).[88] Though perhaps not accepted enthusiastically throughout the force, the Airman's Creed was an attempt by senior leadership to put in writing what the individual Airman should identify with—flying, fighting, and winning in the domains of air, space, and cyberspace. What it means to be an Airman is still a difficult concept for the Air Force, as it means different things to different people, sometimes even including in the definition the identities of retired Airmen and partners in the aerospace industry.[89] This inclusion of civilians outside the Service further clouds the issue of institutional identity. While the core values and the Airman's Creed are a respectable "corporate answer," they come up short in describing the individual identity of an Airman, the "different type of fighting man" (sic) described by Generals Arnold and Eaker during the fight for Air Forceindependence.[90] As one senior officer suggests, "Airman is a simple

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[87] AFDD Vol 2, *Leadership*, 30.
[88] Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 71.
[89] The Honorable James G. Roche, Secretary of the Air Force, "Opening Speech," in *A Century of Air Power Leadership: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Jacob Neufeld (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2007), 4.
[90] Col Timothy Kirk (Chief, Maintenance Division, United States Air Forces in Europe), interview by the author, 18 February, 14 and Parton, "The Thirty-One Year Gestation of the Independent USAF," 154.

word, the depth of what it means to be an Airman is a career long quest."[91]

The past two Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force, Generals Norton Schwartz and Mark Welsh, have highlighted the concept that "Every Airman is an Innovator." In the latest Air Force vision document, "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, Global Power for America," released in 2013, General Welsh indirectly addresses the criticisms of Builder's *Icarus Syndrome*, that Airmen are defined by the means (aircraft, weapons) rather than the ends (war). Welsh states, "while it is natural to define the Air Force in terms of its aircraft, missiles, or satellites, in reality, the Service's unmatched capabilities exist only and precisely because of the imagination, innovation, and dedication of its people."[92] According to Welsh, the "spirit of innovation" is what defines an Airman, and it is up to Air Force leaders to develop the individual identity of Airmen while fostering innovative thinking.[93] Welsh believes that for the Air Force to be successful, innovation must be "almost a genetic trait of every Airman," as the Air Force engages in "the most contested, the most congested, and the most competitive [domains], both commercially and militarily."[94]

General Welsh's vision statement for the Air Force centering on "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power," also seeks to help Airmen better identify their place in the Service. The goal of inclusiveness in the document encourages Airmen to find their role in the Air Force through one or a combination of the three outlined focus areas—vigilance, reach, and power. In emphasizing the importance of personal identity as an Airman in the Air Force, General Welsh seeks to highlight

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[91] Col Walter Lindsley, Director of Staff, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, to the author, e-mail, 11 February 2014.

[92] General Mark Welsh, "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power for America" (HQ USAF: 2013), 3.

[93] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," 3.

[94] "Air Force News Briefing by Secretary Donley and General Welsh on the State of the Air Force in the Pentagon Briefing Room" (US Defense Department Transcript, 11 January 2013) and "Defense Department Press Briefing on the State of the Air Force in the Pentagon Briefing Room" (US Defense Department Transcript, 24 May 2013).

the criticality of each individual, stating, "whether you're a pilot, maintainer, special operator, medical specialist, instructor, [admin troop], or any other job in the Air Force, you're an absolutely critical member of [the] team."[95] Further, he states that Airmen "bring to life" the core missions of the Air Force and each have a personal and important role in integrating airpower across the three domains of air, space, and cyberspace.[96] Thus, General Welsh desires to create individual social identity along the lines described by Ashmore in giving Airmen identification with both a collective social group—the Air Force—and employment in a definitive social role—their place in the Air Force based on the mission sets of vigilance, reach, and power.[97] By harnessing the "living engine of [the] Air Force," and by making sure each individual has a role and identity in the organization, Gen Welsh is attempting to define explicitly what it means to be Airman.[98]

In a CSAF research project completed by Air Force officers attending the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) in 2013, the authors found that while innovation is important, "leadership of Airmen must recognize innovation is an underlying attribute of [the identity of Airmen]; not *the* fundamental characteristic of the Air Force identity" (emphasis in original).[99] Thus, the identity of individual Airmen relates not only to innovation and utilizing technology, but also in the ability to project airpower while adapting the training, techniques and procedures used.[100] The SAASS project presented six enduring principles of airpower—speed, access, precision, economy of risk, innovation, and continuous engagement—and posited that these principles, when joined

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[95] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," 0.
[96] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," 1.
[97] Richard Ashmore, Lee Jussim, and David Wilder, eds., *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 240.
[98] Sec Donley and Gen Welsh, "State of the Air Force Briefing," 24 May 2013.
[99] School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security: From the Past, the Future," Slide Notes, 10 April 2013, 9.
[100] SAASS Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security," 9.

with the aforementioned Air Force core values, make up the common traits that should be present in every Airman's individual identity.[101] Outside of these, many other elements contribute to defining who each individual Airmen is, including personal issues such as family, friends, hobbies, and fitness.[102] Thus, Airmen have a foundation on which their individual identity is built, and what it means to be an Airman may be slightly different for each person based on context.

Many senior leaders, including General Welsh, equate being an Airman with "seeing problems from an alternative perspective."[103] They also argue that every Airman—Active, Guard, Reserve and Civilian—regardless of specialty or role should be an innovative thinker and that this is a major part of the culture and heritage of being an Airman.[104] General Welsh believes that,

> The Air Force's competitive advantage begins with its ability to recruit, develop, and retain innovative warriors with strong character, a belief in respect for others, and a commitment to high standards and our core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do....Airmen continue to lead the way in integrating military capabilities across air, space, and cyberspace. In the face of an unknown and unpredictable future, the American military's ability to conduct successful joint operations is enhanced by the power of Airmen.[105]

The issue of recruiting, developing, and retaining Airmen is critical, as the Air Force wants to attract a certain kind of person who feels a connection to the Air Force for the same reason others may connect to the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps.[106] As noted in Chapter 2, Diamond argues that the relationship between an individual and an organization is

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[101] SAASS Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security," 7-10.
[102] SAASS Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security," 10.
[103] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," 3.
[104] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," 3.
[105] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," 3.
[106] Maj Gen Garrett Harencak (Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, Headquarters United States Air Force, Pentagon, Arlington, VA), interview by author, 20 February 2014.

the initial manifestation of organizational identity.[107] Thus, Airmen must be developed from day one to have an individual identity that fits within the Air Force organizatio. As a retired senior officer put it, "Airman is a difficult term to fully define…but it's good to keep asking 'what is an Airman?'"[108]

Air Force Tribalism and Force Development

The United State Air Force is an organization made up almost 700,000 Airmen (including the Guard and Reserve components) and operates as a multiple-identity organization with many cultural subdivisions, or *tribes*.[109] Builder calls these tribes "stovepipes" in which "operational specialties…[promote] friction through in-group and out-group dynamics"[110] and "specialists [tend] to look up the pipe of their own profession rather than the chain of command."[111] Based on the force-development construct of the Air Force, Airmen grow up in tribes based on their technical expertise and experiences within their Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs); Major Commands (MAJCOMs); or functional communities, e.g., fighter pilots, maintainers, or cyber operators. This tribe or clan culture in the Air Force has posed great challenges for senior leaders' attempts to develop a common Air Force organizational identity.[112] As then-CSAF General McPeak said in 1992, "Air Force people are intensely loyal … But, absent a clear understanding of overarching purpose, some people give their loyalty to the next best thing—their particular jobs or their equipment."[113]

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[107] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 80-81.

[108] Lt Gen (ret) Richard Y. Newton III (Executive Vice President, Air Force Association, Arlington, VA), interview by author, 26 Feb 14.

[109] See Chapter 2, p. 13.

[110] As quoted in Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 188.

[111] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, xvi.

[112] Though tribalism exists in all career fields, officer and enlisted, due to time and scope limits this essay will only directly address the tribalism in the officer corps.

[113] Merrill A. McPeak, *Selected Works 1990-1994*, (Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 1995), 153. Emphasis added, and Geranis, "Building on Builder," 63.

According to Builder, though the Air Force has gone through many changes over the years, "the aviators, by right of history and seniority, [retain] control of the institution; but their evident affection for their airplanes create[s] a caste and, hence, competition among the factions."[114] Non-rated personnel, those who do not fly airplanes, are consequently relegated to a generally lower status, echoing Billy Mitchell, "The work of an air force depends on the men that fly the planes, not primarily on those that remain on the ground."[115] While General Arnold understood the importance of those in support roles, the love of flying and love of machines has been so pervasive in the service designed for fighting in the air that pilots tend to have an "accumulated advantage" in achieving promotions and key positions, as the Air Force has built a career path for pilots to get more breadth and has historically put them in more rewarding high-level staff positions.[116] However important the logistics and support "tail" in the modern Air Force, a two-class system exists between pilots and non-pilots.[117]

As senior leaders developed the Air Force officer personnel system, they gave much thought to the construct, eliminating early on the idea of dividing the force into corps based on specialties, like the Army.[118] While the Air Force realized it would need both specialists and generalists, it designed a system in which all non-medical and non-legal officers would be grouped together as "Officers of the Line of the Air Force." While the idea was that this would allow for individuals to consider themselves as officers first and then as a member of their specialty, it did not work. Officers identified themselves by their vocational identity instead of by their profession, i.e., as a fighter pilot instead of as an Air Force officer,

[114] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 35.

[115] Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 6.

[116] Maj Gen Harencak, interview with the author, 20 February 2014 and Maj Gen Leahy, interview with the author, 10 February 2014.

[117] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 264.

[118] Vance O. Mitchell, *Air Force Officers: Personnel Policy Development, 1944-1974* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996), 284.

most likely due to the technical expertise, training, and experience required within their vocational identity to become proficient.[119] Thus, the beginnings of an occupation-based tribalism were set in place.

Professor Dennis Drew describes how Air Force leaders today suffer from an overall lack of general professional competence. He argues that "modern airpower provides unparalleled flexibility that can be fully exploited only by airpower leaders with [an] agile and nuanced Clausewitzian mind-set" and that the development of distinct, over-specialized tribes in Air Force officer corps prevents the growth of such leaders.[120] As General Charles Boyd relates,

> The Air Force attracts technologically oriented young men and women, gives them the niftiest gadgets in the world, and says 'go do it.' Then at a certain point—major or lieutenant colonel—we say 'put away those gadgets. We want you be a sophisticated geostrategic thinker, planner, articulate with Congress.'…The question is, how do we provide the necessary technical competence and skill, but at the same time broaden thinking about the connections of military force and diplomacy? It's a challenge for the whole institution.[121]

This correlates with official policy, as the Air Force personnel directorate at the Pentagon has said in official briefings that "an officer is expected to spend the first 11 years of his career developing tactical expertise in a weapons system," not focusing on abstract thinking.[122] The result is that the perspectives of Airmen are framed by their functional identities, rather than by the identity of the Air Force as a whole.[123]

A potential source of the lack of professional competence referred to by Drew is the inconsistencies of a hierarchically based reward system

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[119] Vance Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 285 and Col Kirk, interview with the author, 18 Feb 14.

[120] Dennis Drew, "Three Pillars of Competence," in *Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect: Essays on War, Airpower, and Military Education* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2008), 227-228.

[121] General Charles Boyd as quoted in Howard D. Belote, *Once in a Blue Moon: Airmen in Theater Command* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2000), 76.

[122] Scott A. Bethel, Aaron Prupas, Tomislav Z. Ruby, and Michael V. Smith, "Developing Air Force Strategists: Change Culture, Reverse Careerism," *Joint Force Quarterly*, issue 58 (3rd quarter 2010): 84.

[123] Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 56.

for promotion, schooling, command selection, etc. in the tribalized Air Force. As Jonathan Riley states, "Without a fundamental reengineering of [the] reward structure, there is no reason to believe that career-field identification will lose any of its strength in the future."[124] As one senior leader noted, "[The] Air Force is built of tribes….it is very difficult to rally all around a single organizational identity."[125] Instead, leaders must ensure they are instilling values both in the everyday work environment and in PME courses. Additionally, according to a former Air Force Director of Personnel, the personnel system should strive to put the right people, in the right career fields, at the right place, at the right time. The Air Force must be a learning organization nimble enough to "keep adaptable for the joint fight."[126]

The narrowed focus on only certain core functions has been an Air Force problem since its birth. It has contributed to tribalism, particularly as the Air Force has taken on more missions. General Norton Schwartz, CSAF in 2008-2012 "pushed to broaden the Air Force's definitions of its core missions beyond strategic bombing and control of the skies," especially in light of the rapid growth of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) pilots and support personnel.[127] Despite this,

> One could argue that the expansion of mission areas—from air; to air and space; to air, space and cyberspace; to air, space, cyberspace and nuclear (undeclared, but the Air Force is clearly heading in that direction to correct past deficiencies in this important mission area) has left many Airmen out of touch with a broad Air Force organizational culture. Instead, they have resorted to the exact behavior for they were condemned in Builder's "Icarus

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[124] Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 63.

[125] Maj Gen Cooper, to the author, e-mail, 20 February 2014.

[126] Lt Gen (ret) Newton, interview with the author, 26 February 2014.

[127] Greg Jaffe, "Drone Pilots Rise on Winds of Change in Air Force; The venerable Aviator May Take a Back Seat to Invulnerable Technicians Working on the Ground," *Washington Post*, 28 February 2010, Met 2 edition, A01 and Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 83.

Syndrome"—they have hunkered down in the comfort of their individual specialties…[128]

As tribalism continues to permeate the Air Force, it is up to the CSAF to work to keep the tribes together in accomplishing the mission. This is difficult because "there is much less 'glue,' less single-mission simplicity, and less combined physical contact than one finds in the other services."[129] Wiley Barnes posits that there are two significant effects of the functional specialty fracturing of the Air Force: a feeling of insecurity relative to the other military services and a lack of integrative thinking.[130] When the Air Force cannot cogently argue for how it will employ its own forces across air, space, and cyberspace, it shows its shortcomings in joint operations.[131] As Barnes relates,

> The Air Force preference for sustaining depth of service warfighting skills over breadth of skill, experience, and a mindset of warrior leaders is caused, in part, by two components of service culture, functionally focused officer development and an institutional insecurity in the Air Force's status as an independent service. The service culture has historically allowed its functional communities to develop leaders, each using its own formula. The Air Force routinely feels compelled to justify its existence as an independent service, despite the powerful allure of airpower gratification without commitment for politicians, the service's inextricable ties to the politically powerful defense industry, and the fundamental need for a cadre of professional airmen to integrate within the national defense apparatus.[132]

[128] Dr. Matthew C. Stafford, Chief Academic Officer, Squadron Officer College, Maxwell AFB, AL, as quoted in Timothy B. Missler, "A Service in Transition: Forging an Integrated Institutional Identity for the United States Air Force" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 106.
[129] James M. Smith, *USAF Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the 21st Century* (USAF Academy, CO: USAF Institute for National Security Studies, 1998), 51.
[130] Wiley L. Barnes, "A New Vector for Air Force Development of Joint Leaders" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 49.
[131] Barnes, "A New Vector," 49-50.
[132] Barnes, "A New Vector," 52.

While tribalism is not necessarily bad for an organization, the Air Force has not managed it particularly well.[133] Tribal values have dominated the focus of most Airmen, and are directed toward "airframes or commands instead of to the broader organization."[134] In a surprising twist, a study found that "the pilot force was found to be the more occupational of Air Force specialties, with the non-flying support officers having a much higher degree of institutional loyalty."[135] This is important when one considers that pilots occupy the majority of the senior leadership positions of the Air Force and, as Peg Neuhauser notes, "people who have been very skillful as leaders of their own tribes can have a difficult time adjusting to [a] new and expanded role after they are promoted. Their loyalties may stay with their original tribe, making it easy for them to see only that point of view in any dispute or planning effort."[136]

Ingroup bias is important to consider as the higher-status group of pilots has developed. The pride inherent in a dominant group such as fighter pilots means that they theoretically cannot improve their position unless the outgroup, non-fighter pilots, is doing less well. These group identity characteristics thus stoke the fire of tribalism in the Air Force, as "the establishment of positive distinctiveness" is realized, to the detriment of the overall organization.[137]

Because the Air Force is a very technical service, some leaders believe that tribalism is permissible in the sense that experts are needed in the various career fields. The problems develop when individuals are not only specialized, they are "exclusivized," never leaving a particular

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[133] Missler, "A Service in Transition," 84.
[134] Missler, "A Service in Transition," 85.
[135] Frank R. Wood, "At the Cutting Edge of Institutional and Occupational Trends," 31-32, quoted in, James Smith, *USAF Culture and Cohesion, 19* and Missler, 85.
[136] Missler, "A Service in Transition," 86.
[137] Ashmore, *Social Identity*, 24.

type of weapon system or unit.[138] Many officers in particular are "stovepiped" and never allowed to broaden their skill set, perpetuating the overspecialization problem. Despite this phenomenon, the "technical depth" gained by individuals focusing on particular skills can be beneficial to the overall Air Force if managed effectively.[139] An important caveat to this observation is that technical expertise should not come at the expense of overall vision and identity. As Builder said, "the complexity of Air Force systems and operations demands specialists and specialized training. What is [also] needed is thinking beyond those demands" to establish an organizational identity.[140]

The current CSAF, General Welsh, believes a balance can be struck between being an Airman and being part of a tribe, stating "We've got room for pride in our Air Force. It's okay to be proud of your tribe, the people you grew up with, the mission set you come in with, who you love. We can still be Airmen first and be proud of who we are."[141] However, as Airmen immerse themselves in their tribes and mature in an inflexible developmental system, tribalism tends to become stronger. Though units within the Air Force may develop into high-performing systems, the Air Force as a whole may not.[142] Importantly, this tribal development develops leaders who are overly functionally oriented. According to a former CSAF, this occupationally-focused development is "no longer sufficient for the institution."[143]

A general consensus among senior leaders interviewed for this research is that the best and brightest strategic thinkers should be in charge, regardless of their occupational background. Despite this consensus and "although many Airmen within the service do think

[138] Maj Gen Harencak, interview with author, 20 February 2014.

[139] Maj Gen Cooper, to the author, e-mail, 20 February 2014.

[140] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 9.

[141] Welsh, 2014 AFA address.

[142] Peter Vaill, "The Purposing of High Performing Systems," *Organizational Dynamics*, Autumn 1982, 26.

[143] General Michael E. Ryan, "A Word from the Chief: Transformational Leaders," *Aerospace Power Journal*, Summer 2001, and Barnes, "A New Vector," 48.

strategically, they are not powerful enough to break the bureaucratic inertia of a means-centric focus."[144] According to Schein, the dominant groups will set as a main criteria "want[ing] someone who will fit in." In the case of pilots ascending to the highest senior leadership positions after being developed in a "stovepiped" career field, they may have a tendency to choose others of their background for key jobs. Thus, the system perpetuates itself as the same type of people garner the key command and staff jobs needed for promotion to the highest ranks and the individuals outside the group do not rise in the same numbers to the same types of positions.

The Air Force attempts to mitigate the negative effects of tribalism through training and education. Training and education combine to "provide experiences that deliberately develop tactical expertise, operational competence, and strategic vision."[145] Professional Military Education (PME) tries to develop Airmen into better generalists, but a certain "loss of balance" still exists in the development of personnel.[146] Recent CSAFs have noted that everyone is important in the Air Force and that "[the Air Force is] about active duty. It's about Guard. It's about Reserve. It's about all the dimensions—air, space, and cyber—that allows us to have the best Air Force on the planet."[147] To be effective, this messaging will have to resonate with the tribal audience to bring about a common culture.[148]

Why the Air Force May Need a Common Organizational Identity

The SAASS study from 2013 concluded that, to break down tribalism, the Air Force "should shift its collective identity away from artifacts and onto its people through the concept of the *Airman as a*

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[144] Geranis, "Building on Builder," 108.
[145] AFDD Vol 2, *Leadership*, 54.
[146] Col Kirk, interview with the author, 18 February 2014.
[147] "DOD News Briefing with Gen. Schwartz from the Pentagon," 24 July 2012.
[148] Barnes, "A New Vector," 49.

Weapon (emphasis in original)."[149] In order to break down tribalism, there would have to be a revamping of the force development construct and an end to the "white scarf syndrome," in which aircraft and weapons systems are more important than the employment of all Airmen employing airpower.[150] Importantly,

> If air power is a spear, then the point of that spear is the strike systems which deliver the "fire and steel" (bombs, missiles, gunfire); and the shaft of the spear is all those support systems (surveillance, communications, navigation, jamming, refueling, logistics, transport, medical, weather, security, etc.). The point of the spear is getting sharper, better aimed, and more deadly every day because of technology; but the shaft is getting longer and more important as well. With every passing year, with every advance in technology, the point of the spear gets smaller, while the shaft of the spear gets bigger.[151]

While the Air Force may be effective currently as a multiple-identity organization, the possibility of becoming a conflicted-identity organization in the future should be strong enough to make senior leaders consider significant changes to the force development and organizational construct of the service.

Although many attempts have been to mitigate tribalism, the Air Force is an organization with multiple identities. Whether this is appropriate or harmful to the organization depends upon the perspective of the individual Airman. As Figure 2 shows, a survey of mid-level officers from all specialties conducted in 2010 shows that there is a sense in the Air Force that certain Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) are more important than others.[152]

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[149] SAASS Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security," 12.
[150] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 221.
[151] Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 263 and Geranis, "Building on Builder," 40.
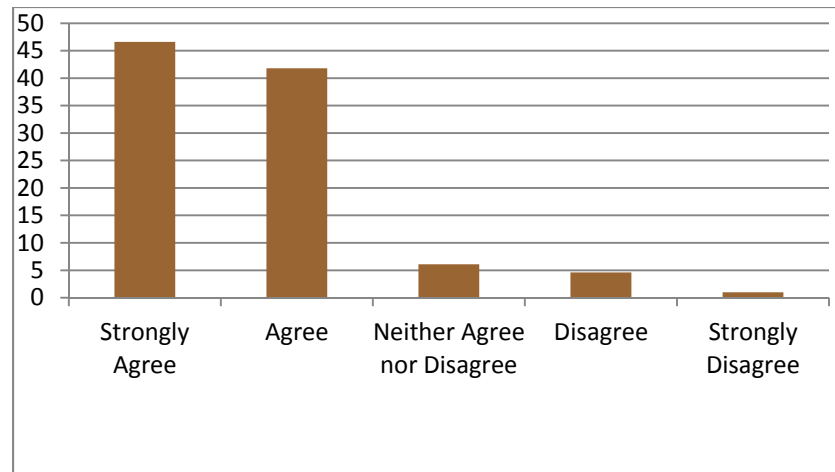[152] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 180.

Figure 2: Within the USAF officer corps, there is an unwritten "culture" that places more importance and prestige on some AFSCs over others.
Source: Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 180.

What this means for the Air Force in the future is unclear, though internal conflict in an organization can lead to the *conflicted organizational identities* which Diamond shows *results from the lack of planned change.* As organizations fracture and there are no clearly defined objectives for the whole, anxiety and disorientation among workers prevails and they may begin to feel powerless. In these scenarios, "organizational leaders must be prepared to confront painful relational conflicts and emotions tied to organizational membership that are unaddressed."[153]

Communication Inconsistencies in the Air Force

Inconsistencies in public messages from senior Air Force leadership over the years have contributed to the multiple identities of the current Air Force and affected both the Air Force's image and culture. As Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force change frequently, the mission statements and vision statements change as well (see Table 1). Though many of the missions and visions are similar, the inability of leaders to

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[153] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 217-218.

agree on a message is concerning, as Airmen attempt to relate to stakeholders and manage their internal culture. As Michael Geranis notes, "The core values are visible everywhere, are constantly recited, and used as a basis for supervisor-subordinate mentor meetings. Interestingly the Air Force does not have the same success in determining the mission or vision statement for the institution."[154]

In not being able to agree on a sustaining mission statement and vision, the Air Force shows to the outside world that it is still not sure what it wants to be as an organization. As General Welsh observes, the core missions of the Air Force have not significantly changed since its founding, with exception of new domains (space and cyberspace) in which to operate.[155] Similarly, the overall function of the Air Force—to deter war and win if deterrence fails—hasn't changed. Thus, it is puzzling that an agreed-upon mission statement and vision is still elusive.[156]

As noted above, conflicted organizational identities arise when organizations lack "clearly defined and publicly shared objectives and mission…"[157] Air Force Airmen in general have become numb to the changes in mission and vision statements through the years, and senior leaders may have difficulty in enculturating Airmen given this background of institutional turbulence. In a specialized, technical service like the Air Force where "stovepipes exist," relating to the mantra of "Fly, Fight, Win…in Air, Space, and Cyberspace" may be difficult.

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[154] Geranis, "Building on Builder," 70.
[155] Welsh, "Global Vigilance," x.
[156] Geranis, "Building on Builder," 64-65.
[157] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 216.

Table 1: CSAF Mission & Vision Statements

CSAF	Years	Mission Statement	Vision Statement	White Paper	Core Val
Gen. McPeak	1990 1994	Global Reach--Global Power	Air Force people building the world's most respected *air and space force*...global power and reach for America. (Emphasis added)	Global Reach-Global Power 1990	
Gen. Fogleman	1994 1997	Global Engagement	Air Force people building the world's most respected *air and space force*...global power and reach for America. (Emphasis added)	Global Presence 1995	
Gen. Ryan	1997 2001	Global Engagement	Air Force people building the world's most respected *aerospace force*...global power and reach for America. (Emphasis added)	Global Engagement 1997	
Gen. Jumper	2001 2005	To Defend the United States and Protect its Interests Through *Air & Space Power* (Emphasis added)	Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power	N/A	
Gen. Mosley	2005 2008	The mission of the US Air force is to *deliver sovereign options* for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests-to *fly and fight in Air, Space, and Cyberspace*. Prepare for & Participate in the Joint Fight, Anywhere, Anytime, Develop, Maintain, and Sustain the Warfighter Edge, Provide Motivated, Ethical, Accountable Air Force Warriors. (Emphasis added)	Lasting Heritage...Limitless Horizons	Global Vigilance-Global Reach-Global Power 2007	Excellence in All We Do - Service Before Self - Integrity First
Gen. Schwartz	2008	The mission of the United States Air Force is to "*fly, fight, and win..in air, space and cyberspace*"--as an intergral member of the Joint team that ensures our Nation's freedom and security. (Emphasis added)	An Air Force ready to fulfill the commitments of today and face the challenges of tomorrow thorugh *strong stewardship, continued precision and reliability, and dedication* to persistent Global Vigilance, Reach and Power for the Nation. (Emphasis added)	Global Vigilance-Global Reach-Global Power 2008	
	2009 2012	The mission of the United States Air Force is to "*fly, fight, and win..in air, space and cyberspace*." (Emphasis added)	The United State Air Force will be a trusted, reliable joint partner with our sister services known for integrity in all our activities, including supporting the Joint mission first and foremost. We will *provide compelling air, space and cyber capabilities* for use by Combatant Commanders. We will excel as stewards of all Air Force resources in service to the American people, while *providing precise and reliable Global Vigilance, Reach and Power* for the Nation. (Emphasis added)	Global Vigilance-Global Reach-Global Power '2008	
Gen. Welsh	2012 Pres	Fly, Fight, and Win	The Worlds Greatest Air Force--**Powered by Airmen, Fueled by Innovation**	The United States Air Force, A Tradition of "*Over Not Through*" -The World's Greatest Air Force-Powered by Airmen, Fueled by Innovation 2013	

Source: Adapted from Geranis, "Building on Builder," 66.

Conclusion

Air Force leaders have never agreed on how to define the term "Airman," thus perpetuating the lack of a common organizational identity for the Service. The tribalism inherent in the Service, when coupled with an imbalanced force development system, has created friction and turmoil among different groupings of career fields. Dominant ingroups have shaped the Air Force throughout its history, at times to the detriment of the other groups within the Service. While excellence within the tribes is encouraged, there has not been a substantial effort to affect the boundaries among the subcultures. The absence of planned change to prevent the development of a conflicted-identity organization could cause the Air Force to fracture even more and degrade the capibilities of the Service through the development of a disoriented, powerless workforce. Communications inconsistencies from senior leaders continue to cloud the issue of how the Air Force will define its future organizational identity.

In summary, the United States Air Force is a multiple-identity, occupation-based tribal organization with a rich history of combat and peacetime excellence. Thornhill's cultural narratives provide a useful template for describing the identity of the Air Force through its 67 years of existence. Senior leaders have not devised a single phrase or statement that resonates with Airmen and defines the Services's identity. The need for the Service to adapt and move toward a better sense of common organizational identity is requied to prevent devolving into a conflicted-identity organization. Though the Air Force has been largely effective as a tribal, "stovepiped" organization, leaders must examine the historical cultural narratives and changes in mission focus and develop a method of rigorous self-diagnosis regarding individual, group, and organizational identity. A framework of coherent, executable tasks to address these issues will enhance the identity of the Air Force as a whole and help ensure the relevance of the Service in the coming decades.

Chapter 4

What the Air Force Should Consider in Developing a Common Organizational Identity

You cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking that created them.

-Albert Einstein

The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind is to get the old one out.

-Sir Basil H. Liddell Hart

Nothing will more quickly go to the vital interests of the Air Force or influence its future than the choices about what is included or excluded from the Air Force's definition of air power.

-Carl Builder

As the Air Force draws down and fiscal realities force focused self-examination, the Service must consider its future and how it portrays itself in an increasingly complex joint military environment. While revolutionary change is often disruptive, a managed evolutionary change can be effective. There are many problems inherent in the development of a common Air Force organizational identity, especially since the Service already consists of multiple tribes and identities. Adopting a culture of airmindedness, entwined with an effective learning culture, could be sustaining for the future and improve the Service in many ways. Though it is difficult to foresee the exact nature of the Air Force's future role, several issues regarding identity, culture, and image are worthy of examination to help the Air Force remain the dominant airpower organization in the world. The Air Force must consider all these issues as it considers developing a common organizational identity.

The Air Force Through the Lens of the Organizational Dynamics Model

The Air Force must thoroughly examine its organizational identity in order to remain relevant as a military service. The ability to answer better the question "who are we as an organization?" will lead to an understanding of what the common organizational identity should be.[1] The internal self-reflection required of the Air Force in determining what the service stands for, what values it espouses, and what image it portrays can be analyzed thoroughly using the previously considered Hatch and Schultz organizational dynamics. The Air Force's identity is complex, but understanding the relationships within the organization and with external stakeholders is a vital first step in determining a way forward.[2]

The first analysis is in the loop of the Hatch and Schultz model concerning identity and image. Image is defined by Hatch as the externally-oriented understanding of the organization.[3] The Air Force has an image it must present to multiple stakeholders. The external stakeholders for the Air Force are 1) the American public including industry; 2) the President and the Secretary of Defense; 3) the other services, allies, and coalition forces; and 4) potential enemies. The reflections of these four images then help define the core identity of any service as it interprets, through the Brown concept of *mirroring*, what the stakeholders think of it.[4] It must be noted in this analysis that the Air

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[1] Jonathan Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity: Balancing the Internal and External Pressures of Image and Culture" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 11.

[2] Andrea Casey, "Creating an Organizational Culture to Support Strategic Thinking," in "Exploring Strategic Thinking: Insights to Assess, Develop, and Retain Army Strategic Thinkers," eds. Heather Wolters, Anna Grome, and Ryan Hinds (Fort Belvoir, VA: United States Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2013), 107.

[3] Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," *Human Relations* 55, no. 8 (2002), 991 and Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 10-11.

[4] Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 99-106.

Force's nature as a multiple-identity organization means that a common identity does not currently exist.

To each of its external stakeholders, the Air Force must present slightly different images and must listen to their inputs in adjusting its image appropriately. To the American public, the Air Force must cast itself as a ready force able to defeat any potential adversary, accomplishing its mission with minimal loss of life and within budgetary constraints. As Huntington observed, "If a service does not possess a well-defined strategic concept, the public and the political leaders will be confused as to the role of the service, uncertain as to the necessity of its existence, and apathetic or hostile to the claims made by the service upon the resources of society."[5] During periods of peace, the American public does not have a particularly strong relationship with the Air Force; thus, the Air Force must be proactive in presenting an image of strength and professionalism through air shows, media campaigns, and targeted outreach. Recruiters, aerial demonstration teams, and Airmen themselves all play important parts in presenting the Air Force image to the American people.

In turn, the Air Force must listen to inputs from the people to develop and enhance an appropriate image. Although it is nearly impossible to gauge empirically, recent scandals involving cheating in the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) force, unprofessional conduct among Military Training Instructors (MTIs), and comments in former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates's memoirs have probably resulted in a less-than-favorable opinion by the American people.[6] The Air Force continues to listen to the public, is open to the criticism of the media,

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[5] Samuel P. Huntington, "National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings,* vol. 80, no. 5, (May 1954): 483.

[6] Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War,* (New York: Random House, 2014). For a concise summary of Gates' relationship with the Air Force , see John A. Tirpak, "Gates Versus the Air Force," *Air Force Magazine*, 5 February 2014, http://www.airforcemag.com/Features/Pages/2014/box020514gates.aspx.

and appears to be displaying effective leadership in rooting out problems with its external image. The Air Force core organizational identity is focused on professionalism within the ranks, including a dedicated balance between the officer and enlisted structures, and superior war-fighting ability to mirror the image expected of it by the American people.[7] Accordingly, the Air Force is focusing on explaining WHY it exists in order to show its stakeholders exactly WHAT it brings to the fight.[8] As shown in Figure 3, there is turmoil in the ranks on what the future holds.
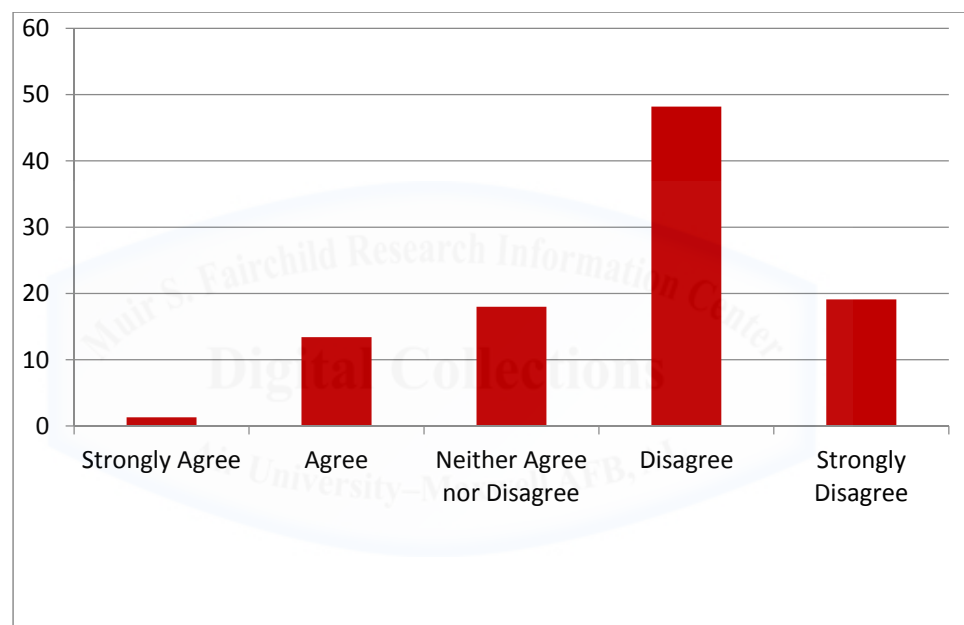
Figure 3: All USAF officers more or less agree on what is important for the future of the USAF.
Source: Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force: Tracing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Indiana University Press, 2014), 166.

The survey conducted by Colonel Jeffrey J. Smith in 2010 with students at Air University shows that officers believe there is a clear disequilibrium in the ranks concerning what direction the Air Force

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[7] Col Timothy Kirk (Chief, Maintenance Division, United States Air Forces in Europe), interview with the author, 18 February 2014.
[8] Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Portfolio, 2009), 64 and Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 88.

should take in the future. In further dissecting the data into categories of fighter pilots and non-fighter pilots, Smith demonstrates that large percentages of both group agree on one thing—their own disagreement about future goals. If the Air Force leadership does not listen to its own people and develop a common view of what the future priorities should be for the Service, it will be difficult to explain the WHY of its existence and relevance to the American public.

The Air Force also has an image it maintains with the stakeholders in the aerospace industry. As CSAF General Mark Welsh III says, "partnerships with industry….are part of success [for the Service]" and long-term relationships are important because they help both industry and the Air Force.[9] As the Air Force works with industry the Service will remain on the cutting edge of technology.[10] Similarly, the decisions made in this arena are having a direct effect on what the Air Force of tomorrow will look like, where the weapon system priorities are, and how Airmen will be utilized to maintain the hardware and software in the future.

The Air Force has presented a specific image in the past to industry that must be reconsidered. According to Geranis, "since Desert Storm the [Air Force] has only increased investments in high price low-observable technologies…reinforcing the tacit message that fighter aviation *is* the solution" (emphasis in original).[11] In the current fiscal environment, the Air Force is prudently working to ensure the bridge to industry is not severed, as according to Secretary James "next to [military and civilian people] in DoD [sic], there is no more direct contribution than that which [industry partners] provide."[12]

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[9] General Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff, US Air Force (address, Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium, Orlando, FL, 20 February 2014).

[10] The Honorable Deborah Lee James, Secretary of the Air Force (address, Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium, Orlando, FL, 20 February 2014).

[11] Michael P. Geranis, "Building on Builder: The Persistent *Icarus Syndrome* at Twenty Years" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2013), 88 (emphasis in original).

[12] Secretary of the Air Force Deborah James, 2014 AFA address.

The Air Force also works at presenting a professional image to the President and Secretary of Defense. This image is similar to that presented to the American public, one of strength and readiness while also managing itself in a fiscally responsible manner. The major difference is that while the Air Force defends the American people, it actually works for the President and Secretary of Defense. Thus, the "expressed identity" that leaves an impression on the President and Secretary of Defense must be one of professionalism and competence.[13] The removal of CSAF General Moseley and Secretary of the Air Force Michael Wynne in 2008 showed fractures in the Air Force's professional image.[14]

An example of the image adjustment required due to the removal of multiple senior leaders was when General Norton Schwartz took over as Chief of Staff from General T. Michael Moseley. Schwartz promptly dropped the implementation of new uniforms and ceased insisting on being the executive agent for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), a key point of friction between the Air Force and its civilian leadership.[15] Indeed, throughout Schwartz's tenure, the Air Force focused on contributions to the joint fight, fixing internal problems, and placing itself back in a position of respect within the national chain of command. Though multiple identities still exist internal to the organization, the relationship with the civilian leadership was improved.

In its relationship with the other services, allies, and coalition partners, the Air Force presents itself with an image of strength and reliability, coupled with professionalism and willingness to be part of a warfighting team. The lack of Airmen in senior leadership positions, both within the Joint Chiefs organization and in the combatant commands,

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[13] Casey, "Creating an Organizational Culture," 107.

[14] Ann Scott Tyson and Josh White, "Top Two Air Force Officials Ousted," *The Washington Post,* 6 June 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/06/05/AR2008060501908.html (accessed 6 May 2014).

[15] Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 68.

presents additional challenges for the Air Force in projecting this image.[16] Though Airmen develop and show operational prowess, according to Major Wiley Barnes, in joint relations "the weakness of today's Air Force leaders lies in their lack of capacity and to appreciate, understand, and apply sister-service, interagency, and coalition contributions to the mission demands of today's environment."[17]An important part of the relationship with the other services is in not being concerned with which commanders are in supported or supporting roles during combat operations, as too much concern over this can fracture relationships.[18] As senior leaders listen to feedback from the other services, this information imbeds itself in the organizational identity and contributes to the relevance of the organization.

Another manifestation of how the Air Force presents itself is the current effort, under CSAF General Welsh, to focus on five core missions only (reduced from 12 in previous doctrine), and how they are employed through air, space, and cyberspace: 1) Air and Space Superiority; 2) Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaisance (ISR); 3) Rapid Global Mobility; 4) Global Strike; and 5) Command and Control.[19] As part of its current efforts to define itself through these missions, the Air Force is building numerous strategy and resource-expenditure documents to address what the role of the Air Force will be in the coming decades, while also revitalizing the "fighting core of [the] Air Force," the squadron, perhaps helping to express its identity more effectively to external

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[16]Howard D. Belote, "Once in a Blue Moon: Airmen in Theater Command, Lauris Norstad, Albrecht Kesselring, and Their Relevance to the Twenty-First Century Air Force" (The CADRE Papers, Maxwell AFB, AL: 1999), 2.

[17] Wiley L. Barnes, "A New Vector for the Air Force Development of Joint Leaders" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010), 51.

[18] Maj Michael J. Power, unpublished notes, Lt Gen David Goldfein presentation to SAASS Class XXIII, 18 Feb 2014.

[19] Welsh, AFA 2014 address. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain how the Air Force is specifically employing forces in these five core missions. See General Mark Welsh speech AFA 2014 for an excellent summary and examples in each mission set.

stakeholders.[20] Secretary of Air Force James is working to define the current Air Force organizational identity by noting,

> The nation has a go-to force and that go-to force is the Air Force, for we are involved with everything that goes on across the joint world. We're available to the President's call at a moment's notice, providing global reach, global power, and global vigilance. We're flexible. We provide options to the President and to the National Command Authorities in minutes and hours -- not days and weeks. And our military, the rest of our military simply can't operate nowadays without the capabilities that we bring to the table.[21]

Finally, the Air Force must present an image to perhaps the most critical external stakeholder of all, potential enemies. The Hatch idea that "expressed identity leaves impressions on others" in the organizational dynamics model underlies the importance of this relationship.[22] Undoubtedly, despite internal conflicts and issues of tribalism, the US Air Force is the most potent and capable air force in the world, a fact recognized by our enemies of the past several conflicts. Nevertheless, the Air Force must continue to present an image of dominance to potential future adversaries. This requirement contributes to the Service's organizational identity. While the Air Force has shown ingenuity in adapting to irregular warfare, the pace at which it did so was too slow for some civilian leadership.[23]

Currently, the Air Force is developing a strategy for the future that will outline how it will organize in the coming decades. The Service will have to decide where the proper focus areas will be in determining its future identity. Applied broadly, the AF vision document, "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power for America" lays out where

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[20] General Mark A. Welsh III, "A Vision for The United States Air Force: The World's Greatest Airmen, Fueled by Innovation," HQ USAF, 10 January 2013, 1, and Welsh, AFA 2014 address, 4.

[21] Secretary of the Air Force Deborah James, 2014 AFA Address.

[22] Casey, "Creating an Organizational Culture," 107.

[23] Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, "Remarks to Air War College" (lecture, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, AL, 21 April 2008).

current CSAF General Welsh believes the identity of the Air Force lies. It may not be a common organizational identity, but it may be a first step toward developing a force of Airmen who know where they fit in to the Air Force mission.[24] It will be critical that these inputs to organizational identity take into account the image that must be presented to current and future enemies.

Following the right-hand side of the Hatch model, the organizational identity of the Air Force also contributes to the Service's image. Because the Air Force does not have a common focus such as "Every Marine a Rifleman," a varying identity is presented to external stakeholders. Not having a common organizational identity directly leads to the lack of a common organizational image. This phenomenon has potential to confuse external stakeholders while nurturing internal turmoil as well, as Airmen become frustrated because they do not understand where it is the Air Force is heading in the future.[25]

Just as image relates to organizational identity, the culture of the Air Force also contributes to Service identity. Culture, according to Hatch, is the internally oriented understanding of an organization.[26] Gray further defines culture as ideals, the evidence of ideas, and behavior.[27]As depicted in the left-hand side of the Hatch model, organizational identity contributes to organizational culture, and culture contributes to identity as it responds to inputs. The multiple-identity Air Force, consisting of different hierarchical tribes, has thus developed multiple cultures, with a common theme being the placement of flight technology at "center stage."[28] The dominant culture, which has been the fighter pilot culture in recent Air Force history, has become the

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[24] Welsh, "Global Vigilance."

[25] Maj Gen John B. Cooper, Director of Logistics, Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations, Logistics, and Mission Support, Pentagon, Arlington, VA, to the author, e-mail, 20 February 14.

[26] Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 991.

[27] Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132.

[28] James M. Smith, *USAF Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the 21st Century* (USAF Academy, CO: USAF Institute for National Security Studies, 1998), 44.

representation of the Service in terms of organizational identity, while that community's influence and power increases.[29] This dominant culture, in and of itself, does not, however, accurately express to external stakeholders what true operational capability exists in the Air Force, i.e., UAVs, space, cyberspace, nuclear.[30] In *The Rise of the Fighter Generals*, Worden states in the conclusion,

> [This book] highlights enduring dangers of parochialism and bias in any organization that is too homogenous in its senior leadership and culture. Homogeneity, as defined by shared experience, limits a total view of the institution's legitimate role. This organizational condition leans towards myopia and monistic thinking, often manifested in a consuming focus on a purpose or mission that favors the dominant culture.[31]

In not developing its culture with a focus on WHY that resonates with Airmen regardless of specialty, the Service does not currently express accurate cultural understandings in its identity, as the Hatch model suggests it should. As Riley argues, "To truly capture the WHY of the Air Force, it has to emerge from tapestry that is its culture, rather than be imposed upon the majority by a zealous—if misguided—minority."[32] General Welsh's current efforts to associate all Airmen with a role in the organization, like General Schwartz before him, are a step toward developing a common culture.

Today's Air Force has multiple organizational identities and multiple internal cultures, resulting in a varied image presented to external stakeholders. As it moves forward in an era of personnel drawdowns and constrained budgets, the Service will have to address the possibility that it may have devolved into an organization with conflicted

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[29] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 181.

[30] Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 182.

[31] Michael R.Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problems of Air Force Leadership 1945-1982* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1998), 238 and Geranis, "Building on Builder," 81.

[32] Riley, "At the Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 89.

identities, where a lack of formal objectives causes anxiety and uncertainty among Airmen.[33] In order to ensure relevance, the Air Force must address the disequilibriums among the multiple identities and cultures within the Service and incorporate the diverse perspectives of all Airmen, leading to a more cohesive sense of a common organizational identity.

What the Air Force Must Do to Move Towards a Common Organizational Identity

The Air Force can move toward greater effectiveness through the development of a shared organizational identity by taking five steps. First, the Air Force must find commonality in its tribes by analyzing their internal goals, how they achieve these goals, and the overall results. Second, the Air Force must take the commonalities and determine its future projections for WHY the Service exists through a robust strategic communications campaign with all Airmen. Third, the must take the developed WHY focus and educate external stakeholders, while at the same time moving away from homogeneity in its own ranks as it implements this focus. Fourth, the Air Force must invest time and energy into developing a culture of airmindedness in all Airmen, building cross-domain leaders who can operate at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare. Finally, the Air Force must adopt a learning culture with learning leaders taking all of the attributes described above and constantly adapting the organization through self-diagnosis and analysis. These tasks present a building-block approach to move the Air Force towards a better sense of a common organizational identity over the course of a generation of Airmen.

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[33] Michael Diamond, *The Unconscious Life of Organizations: Interpreting Organizational Identity* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1993), 216-217.

Task #1: Establish Teams to Identify Basic Assumptions in Each Tribe and Tie Them to Common Organizational Outcomes

To begin moving toward a common organizational identity, the Air Force must first find areas of commonality in its tribes by analyzing goals in particular mission areas; how they achieve their stated goals, i.e., measures of success); and the overall Air Force organizational outcomes. The Air Force must do this without breaking apart tribes in the process. The Air Force should embrace the pride and expertise of the different tribes, while still looking for that which can bring the Service closer together as a warfighting organization.[34] To find the commonalities in the tribes, the Air Force must bring together experts from across the tribes and discuss their basic assumptions, goals, and organizational outcomes. This identity team (IdenT) should meet physically not more than once per year and produce a document that specifically examines tribal assumptions and ties them to organizational outcomes within the context of a defined cultural narrative. Then the commonalities in basic assumptions, when coupled with a common cultural narrative, can spur the process of developing a common organizational identity for the Air Force.

An example of the comparison of tribes that should be enacted by Air Force leaders in search of overall commonalities is displayed in Table 2. Here, the comparison is shown between fighter pilots, maintenance officers, and financial management officers, all focused on, in this case, the mission of air and space superiority. These three career fields represent the CSAF vision statement's key areas of Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power. Fighter pilots operate generally in the Global Power portion of the vision, maintenance officers are present in all three areas, and financial management officers are also present in all three areas. As is seen here, the tie that binds is in the organizational

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[34] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 21.

outcomes. Regardless of what the internal stated goals of an Air Force tribe is and the method of how a tribe accomplishes the mission, the organizational outcomes are the same. Air and Space Superiority's outcome, if successful, is freedom from attack and freedom to attack.

Table 2: Sample Tribes Basic Assumptions in Air and Space Superiority Mission

	Goal	How Achieved (Basic Assumptions of Success)	Air Force Organizational Outcome
Fighter Pilot (11F)	Air and Space Superiority	Bombs/Missiles on Target	Freedom from attack and Freedom to attack
Maintenance Officer (21A/M)	Healthy, operational fleet of aircraft	Disciplined, effective maintenance processes	Freedom from attack and Freedom to attack
Finance Management Officer (65F)	Support of Airmen through organizational resourcing and individual pay	Effective financial management	Freedom from attack and Freedom to attack

Source: Author's original work.

A "pattern of shared basic assumptions"[35] is not well developed across the Air Force, but individual tribes' assumptions need not be transformed in order to move toward a common organizational identity. An analysis of basic assumptions within the Air Force, combined with an initiative toward studying what could constitute a useful common organizational identity is, in itself, wrought with possible conflicts. According to Schein, "any challenge to or questioning of a basic

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[35] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 14, 17.

assumption will release anxiety and defensiveness."[36] To overcome this, Air Force leaders must emphasize the commonality of tribes in achieving overall organizational outcomes and highlight the importance of every Airman in defense of the nation. The way to accomplish this is to define the organizational outcomes of each mission and to make sure all members understand their roles in achieving these outcomes through their own tribes.

Many Airmen today do not identify with the broad mission statement of the Air Force, and thus emphasizing not only where they fit in the Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power vision construct but also how they contribute to overall organizational outcomes is essential to building an organizational identity. A proposed construct for tying core missions to overall organizational outcomes that can be explained to all Airmen is depicted in Table 3. Here, organizational outcomes are worded simply in an effort for all Airmen to develop an understanding of the raw basics of what the Air Force accomplishes across the different missions. This will then enable similarly simple assumptions and methods to be applied to each career field in inculcating in their Airmen the role each one has in achieving these missions.

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[36] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 2d ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 23.

Table 3: Air Force Missions and Organizational Outcomes

Air Force Mission	Organizational Outcome
Air and Space Superiority	Freedom From Attack and Freedom to Attack
Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaisance	Minimization of Uncertainty; Helping Leaders Make Informed Decisions
Rapid Global Mobility	Delivery on Demand of Cargo, Equipment, and Fuel
Global Strike	Rapid, Flexible Projection of Military Power
Command and Control	Employment of the Other Core Missions through Robust, Interconnected, C^2 Systems

Source: Adapted from General Mark A.Welsh III, "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power for America" (HQ USAF: 2013).

Because the basic assumptions of Air Force tribes are deeply rooted in the history and tradition of over 100 years of airpower, care must be taken in cultivating basic assumptions and tying them to organizational outcomes that can be clearly understood. Such careful analysis requires inclusion of all tribes in the aforementioned IdenT involving representatives from across the Air Force. Specifically, Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs), Senior Noncommissioned Officers (SNCOs), Company Grade Officers (CGOs), and Field Grade Officers (FGOs) from each career field should meet for 1 to 2 weeks every year, using the first week to review and define within their career field what basic assumption are tied to the Air Force's organizational outcomes. The second week should be a "cross-check" conference in which members meet with other career fields in their tribe, compare suggestions, and then meet with all of the tribes in a large conference to compare and

contrast all of the assumptions as they relate to Air Force organizational outcomes.

The "Identity Doctrine" document produced from the annual meeting would utilize General Welsh's "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power for America" document as a baseline, while specifically tying career field and tribes' assumptions and methods for success to Air Force organizational outcomes. This document should then be distributed to all Airmen and utilized by commanders in explaining specifically how each Airman's daily work contributes to the greater Air Force organizational outcomes. Much like officer Developmental Teams (DTs), the Airmen who represent each career field in IdenTs should act as a conduit for Airmen within their specialty. The overall goal of this construct is to keep tribal pride and expertise in place, while moving towards a common organizational identity focused on Air Force mission results.

Air Force leadership, in gathering the experts from different tribes together, must also determine if there is utility in altering basic tribal assumptions for the greater good. As a multiple-identity organization with various sets of basic assumptions, the difficulty lies in examining within each particular tribe what basic assumptions would be amenable to change.[37] Altering basic assumptions within tribes could devolve into a process in which a common organizational identity is directed rather than developed and there is a either a lag in acceptance or a complete rejection of the new identity. To prevent this, Air Force leaders within each tribe must ensure acceptance from their members through virtual town-hall meetings, discussion groups, and the like, while also working across tribes to focus how altered assumptions could influence the Service's organizational outcomes. This self-analysis and self-diagnosis, both within and among the tribes, will be time consuming and

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[37] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d ed., 22.

contentious. For these reasons, it should be led by individuals who are trained in organizational identity theory.

Air Force IdenTs meeting annually to determine the commonalities in the basic assumptions of individual tribes will not be enough to move toward development of a common organizational identity. Leaders must also define clearly the cultural narrative that binds all Airmen together. Importantly, leaders must examine the history and development of the Air Force to articulate this cultural narrative. Recalling Thornhill's division of Air Force history into five cultural narratives encompassing organizational identity since the dawn of airpower, Air Force leaders should scrutinize how the development of technology (the airplane) into an offensive independent warfighting organization (the United States Air Force) led to the assumptions that make up the multiple Air Force identities.[38]

A comprehensive consideration of the basic assumptions that existed among Airmen during the period in which the Air Force achieved independence from the Army can lead to lessons learned that are applicable to defining a common organizational identity for the twenty-first century Air Force. In particular, the period just after WWII and before the Air Force gained independence in 1947 is instructive in how to build strong organizational identity. Though Billy Mitchell led the airpower efforts following WWI with great aplomb, the Air Force moved away from innovation during that period, instead focusing largely on independence to the detriment of inventive airpower thinking. The Air Force should instead, as it moves forward in developing a common organizational identity today, follow the example of General Hap Arnold, who led the Air Force to independence and respect with the "victory

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[38] Paula G. Thornhill, "Over Not Through: The Search for a Strong, Unified Culture for America's Airmen" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2012), 10.

through airpower" narrative described by Thornhill.[39] Table 4 highlights the different approaches of Mitchell and Arnold, revealing how Air Force leadership today should focus on the Arnold approach of organizational identity development, using the tenets of the Hatch Organizational Identity Model. The one difference between Arnold's approach and a contemporary approach is that the external image of the modern Air Force is multi-faceted.

Table 4: Comparison of Billy Mitchell and Hap Arnold Focus Areas

	Culture	Identity	Image
Brigadier General Billy Mitchell	Independence-focused	Conflicted, fighter pilot image did not match internal culture of strategic bombardment development	Romantic, pilots in dogfight
General of the Air Force Hap Arnold	Innovation-focused	Multiple identity Air Force, highly effective tribes	Strategic Bombardment Force

Source: Compiled from various sources.

In the "victory through air power" narrative, which was employed by Gen Arnold, the Air Force developed into an effective fighting force, achieved victory in WWII, and gained independence from the Army. This cultural narrative, when combined with the overarching air power narrative of "over not through," gives an effective foundation to the development of a common organizational identity for the modern Air Force. Arnold's vision of developing a strong team across the tribes and the vision that, "Air power is not airplanes alone....Air power is a composite of airplanes, crews, maintenance, bases, supply, and sufficient replacements..." is still relevant today. Airmen must have a cultural narrative that combines the attributes of the "victory through air power" and "over not through" narratives assessed by Thornhill in order to begin

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[39] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 4-5.

development of a common organizational identity. As Colin Gray notes, success is unlikely when organizations are forced to act in ways contrary to their foundational culture and behaviors; thus, leadership must incorporate strongly in all decisions on organizational identity the roots of Air Force history.[40]

Finally, the Air Force must take the organizational outcomes inherent in each of the five mission areas and interweave them with the common cultural narrative described above. Leaders must define clearly what the outcomes of each mission should be, how Airmen in each tribe specifically contribute to that outcome, and how the common cultural narrative of "victory through air power" and "over, not through" bring all Airmen together. The forum for this interweaving is the aforementioned annual conference and team of individuals from each career field. The Chief of Staff should guide these groups and state clearly that the tenets of the two cultural narratives must be the foundation for explaining to Airmen how basic assumptions in each tribe tie to organizational outcomes. For example, fighter pilots must be able to relate how bombs and missiles placed on targets contribute directly to achieving air and space superiority, while explaining also how an innovation-based and independent Air Force is the best organization to achieve this outcome. In this example, the tenets of Hap Arnold in building a team of experts from the ground crew to the trained pilot, all focused on the outcome of air and space superiority, could be taught to all members through the IdenTs and their products, and explained by Airmen to those within and outside the Service. The intertwining of identified organizational outcomes with a cultural narrative provides the foundation for a sustaining thought process that can be described as airmindedness, unique to Air Force Airmen and described in-depth in a subsequent section.

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[40] Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 145.

A possible roadblock to examining the basic assumptions inherent in the Air Force's tribes is that the identities of the tribes contain emotional attachments and key interactions that are difficult to observe.[41] Complicating the problem further is that, as a multiple-identity organization, key interactions which may be challenging to see exist both within and among the tribes. This "emotional substructure" might be important in keeping the Air Force together as a fighting organization, even though it may be difficult to pick out some of the foundational assumptions that support it.[42] Leaders who are intent on transforming the Air Force into an organization with a common identity must consider that the entrenched enculturation of its members, and basic assumptions that make up the overall organizational culture, might be hard to decipher. The only chance to decipher basic assumptions and develop sustaining commonalities will be through a dedicated cross-functional analysis using the tenets of organizational-identity theory and focused on the aforementioned combining of defined organizational outcomes with a strong cultural narrative.

In considering a common organizational identity for the Air Force, leaders can also look eventually beyond basic tribal assumptions to the strategic cultures that exist already in the organization and make note of "that which weaves together" members of each subculture.[43] More than merely finding the commonalities among tribes, this means finding the best practices of different tribes and building them into the commonality construct of organizational outcomes. For example, the discipline and following of technical orders to the letter inherent in nuclear maintenance units are useful traits that may have great applicability throughout the Air Force as leaders try to improve standardization and effectiveness. The context created by the strategic cultures that have

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[41] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 78.
[42] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.
[43] Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 136.

developed in the different Air Force tribes over the past century can be used in considering an organizational identity based on mission outcomes and the cultural narratives discussed previously. For instance, fighter pilots have adopted the "warrior" mantra, while aircraft maintainers pride themselves in being on the front lines of direct support to the flying mission. The shared identity and purpose inherent within different tribes in the Air Force, all operating in their own way toward common organizational goals, can be harnessed and spread throughout the Air Force in hopes of making the Service a truly "high-performing system."[44]

Finally, the Air Force must demonstrate that the commonality in its tribes leads to the same Air Force organizational outcomes and ensure that a successful multiple-identity organization does not become a confused, anxious, and conflicted identity organization. This first step in taking the best from different tribes and developing conduits among the tribes will ensure that the pride and expertise of tribes remains, while the Air Force organization as a whole improves. Defining agreed-upon organizational outcomes for the Air Force in all mission areas will enable IdenTs to develop the ways Airmen in different tribes work toward those outcomes. Furthermore, the adaptation of a strong cultural narrative based on past Air Force history and success will inform the commonalities among tribes and contribute to a greater sense of organizational identity for all Airmen. Successfully implementing these commonalities and narratives will help form a strong foundation for the Air Force. The Air Force must take the commonalities of the tribes and organizational cultural narrative and then determine why the Service exists and how it should develop a strategic communication plan for all Airmen based on these premises.

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[44] Peter Vaill, "The Purposing of High Performing Systems," *Organizational Dynamics*, Autumn 1982, 26.

Task #2: Define WHY the Air Force Exists and Implement a Strategic Communications Program to Teach This to All Airmen

After establishing firmly that the commonality among Air Force tribes lies in the connections to organizational mission outcomes influenced by a common cultural narrative, leaders must focus on explaining WHY the Air Force exists and turning the answer into a robust strategic communications program. Chief of Staff General Mark Welsh III has taken a significant step forward by defining the Air Force in his "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, Global Power for America" vision document, which should become the foundation for studying the Air Force's organizational identity.[45] The vision encourages Airmen to find where they fit in the organization. The next step should be taking the commonalities based on organizational mission outcomes tied with the developed cultural narrative, and building a WHY that is explainable to all Airmen. This WHY, specifically, is the reason for the existence of the Air Force as a whole, with the prelude being the tribal commonalities and cultural narrative.

The Air Force should develop the WHY of its existence and where it is going in the future in three steps: 1) ensuring all tribes are aware of their commonalities and the overarching cultural narrative, 2) Developing a "bumper sticker" WHY slogan that resonates with Airmen and explains succinctly the role of the Air Force writ large and its role in national defense, and 3) ensuring through feedback and buy-in across the force that the WHY makes sense. The IdenTs described in the previous section will play a large part in the development of the initial inputs to leadership in this process, so that all tribes are represented and a zealous minority does not impose a solution on the larger force.[46] Thus, the process of developing the WHY for the Air Force begins with tribal commonalities and cultural narratives, so that leadership understands the social

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[45] See Welsh, "Global Vigilance."
[46] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 89.

identities of the groups and their origins as they attempt to bond the organization in a cohesive identity.[47]

One visible attribute the Air Force might embrace is the slogan "Airmen, Airpower, National Security" because it succinctly describes the most important components of WHY an Air Force exists.[48] First, the Air Force is made up of Airmen who are experts in their career fields and tribes, building the strong multiple identity organization that is the United States Air Force. Second, the Air Force is the only service whose day-to-day focus is strictly on employing airpower across the domains of air, space, and cyberspace. Third, the Air Force focuses on providing defense to the nation and security for Americans through Airmen executing airpower missions. Education of all Airmen as to who Airmen are, what airpower is, and how the Air Force affects national security will be critical in adopting this or some other such slogan and making it easily roll off the tongue of all Service members.

Airmen must understand first what an Airman is and what makes him/her an integral part of WHY the Air Force exists. As noted in Chapter 3, there are multiple definitions and interpretations of what defines the term "Airman." What all Airmen must understand and what should be emphasized repeatedly by leaders is that they each have a unique role in a unit and their individual identity is important. Furthermore, Airmen must know how they fit in to the larger Air Force and how their tribe contributes to organizational outcomes. Finally, while each Airmen has a specific role to play, all must understand that every member is part of the "living engine of [the] Air Force" in sync to employ

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[47] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 23-24.
[48] See School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security: From the Past, the Future," 2013.

airpower successfully.[49] The "Identity Doctrine" document called for in the previous section will inform Airmen specifically as to where they fit in the bigger Air Force and how that fit relates to airpower for the nation.

The second word in the slogan, airpower, is critical in that it is the means through which Airmen influence national security. The previously described nebulous definitions of airpower, as outlined in doctrine, draw a parallel in their emphasis of airpower being applied through the air, space, and cyberspace domains, and that it is a flexible instrument of national power.[50] Airmen must understand that, together, they make up the only military service that focuses every day on employing airpower through the five core missions. Airpower is unique in its forceful, flexible nature in the three domains. But in the end it is merely the means through which talented Airmen secure the nation. While Airmen should know their individual role in the execution of airpower, they must also know through education and training what airpower brings to the joint fight so they can explain it to external stakeholders.

The final part of the slogan, national security, is perhaps self-explanatory. As Airmen adopt the mantra, they must realize that everything Airmen do with airpower in some ways ties to national security. This important piece is what makes the Air Force relevant. Without a demonstrable effect on national security through the process of Airmen executing airpower, there would be no need for a separate United States Air Force. So, while the slogan "Airmen, Airpower, National Security" is neither profound nor complex, it contains within its words the basis of WHY the Air Force exists and should be among those considered as the rallying cry of the Service. Through the tribal commonalities in overall organizational outcomes and a common cultural narrative, the education and training of Airmen by leaders and peers is

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[49] The Honorable Michael Donley and General Mark A. Welsh III, "Defense Department Press Briefing on the State of the Air Force in the Pentagon Briefing Room" (US Defense Department Transcript, 24 May 2013).

[50] See Air Force Doctrine Document Volume 1, *Basic Doctrine*, 4 October 2011.

enhanced by a slogan that reinforces the repetitive patterns Diamond referred to that "comprise the...meaning of organizational life."[51]

Though the slogan outlined above is the most outwardly visible part of the WHY of the Air Force, the true WHY of the Air Force, the "driving cause, purpose, cause, or belief" must be explained by Air Force leaders and not simply imposed upon Airmen.[52] The WHY of the Air Force is complex, and not as simple as a slogan. Despite this, every Airmen can understand the Air Force's reason for existence—the Air Force exists to provide airpower in support of national security.[53] A detailed education and training of every Airman about WHY the Air Force exists must have buy-in from leaders because awareness of the true organizational identity will prepare Airmen for strategically sound and productive organizational change.[54] The way the Air Force must start the change where all Airmen understand the WHY of the organization begins with teaching the newest Airmen.

Through the lens of organizational identity, every Airman who goes through Basic Military Training (BMT), Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC), Officer Training School (OTS), and the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) should be taught the underlying reasons for having an Air Force according to a model that interweaves organizational identity theory and historical cultural narratives. Part of this indoctrination must be explaining the tribal nature of the Air Force, the commonalities in the tribes in their ultimate impact on Air Force organizational outcomes in the five missions, and the cultural narratives of "over, not through" and "victory through airpower" that form the foundation of the Service. It is in the new generation that the "Airman, Airpower, National Security" mantra or something similar to it should be

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[51] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.
[52] Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Portfolio, 2009), 136.
[53] SAASS Class, XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, National Security."
[54] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 77.

adopted to ensure that all Airmen understand the purpose of the Air Force. The internalization of the WHY of the Air Force in all Airmen can perpetuate itself through new generations as basic assumptions are crafted deliberately from day one, in the process of developing a common organizational identity.

The Air Force must also institute a robust strategic-communications plan to educate all Airmen on the new model of enculturation. The most important tenet of the campaign will be to ensure Airmen that the Air Force itself does not need revamping. Rather the "central, enduring, and distinctive" beliefs in the organization must be reinforced.[55] The proposed model should be communicated through a CSAF video sent to all Airmen, commander's calls throughout the Service, and the "Identity Doctrine" document that seeks to tie all Airmen to organizational mission outcomes. Mission results should be the overarching theme of the campaign, and leadership must engage with all Airmen to ensure they know the importance of WHY the Air Force exists and how to communicate that with external stakeholders. In embarking upon this campaign and emphasizing something akin to the "Airmen, Airpower, National Security" slogan as a rallying cry, the Air Force will begin the process of adopting a better common organizational identity based firmly on the foundation of a historically multiple-identity Air Force where Airmen employ airpower in three domains every day to advance national security. The ultimate goal should be to prevent Airmen from becoming lost in how they contribute to the overall effects of airpower and for all Airmen to understand WHY there is an Air Force.[56]

The adoption of a slogan and the education of Airmen on the meaning of WHY there is an Air Force is critical in moving toward a common organizational identity. The Air Force in 2014 is at an important

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[55] Stuart Albert and David A. Whetten, "Organizational Identity," in *Research in Organizational Behavior, Vol. 7,* eds. L.L. Cummings and B.M. Staw (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1985), 263-295.

[56] Maj Gen Timothy J. Leahy, USAF (Director of Operations, J-3, Unites States Special Operations Command), interview by the author, 10 February 2014.

turning point, and it must be both proactive and disciplined in order to ensure relevance in the coming decades. As the force shrinks by 25,000 personnel in the next few years and the fiscal constraints of sequestration and other budget cuts take effect, senior leaders must adapt and transform the force, "creat[ing] the wave instead of catching the wave."[57] A recurring theme in interviews with senior officers concerning the issue of a common Air Force identity was the need for a revitalization of discipline, motivation, dignity, and respect. While the core values of integrity, service, and excellence are critical and doctrine should be embraced to better develop identity, the key part of looking at the future involves dedicated leaders at all levels. As Lieutenant General Michael R. Moeller observed, this is important in "ensur[ing] that every Airman knows where he or she fits into the mission and understands that only through individual excellence while pulling together as a single team will [the Air Force] achieve [its] goals."[58]

In addressing a common organizational identity at this critical time, one senior officer said that the Air Force must "continue the tradition of setting standards high, teaching our members how the team functions and ensuring they commit so that [the Service] can achieve as [a] team."[59] In order to build a better team in the future, the Air Force must consider why it exists. As Riley relates, "the WHY is the fundamental expression of what an organization values and serves to differentiate the organization in a way that creates connections with people who value the same things."[60] The answer to the WHY question for the Air Force can be explained simply when Airmen become educated on the topic, but the discussion on this topic is probably an even more

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[57] Lt Gen (ret) Richard Y. Newton III (Executive Vice President, Air Force Association, Arlington, VA), interview by the author, 26 February 2014.

[58] Lt Gen Michael R. Moeller, USAF, HQ USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Programs, to the author, e-mail, 2 March 2014.

[59] Col Walter Lindsley, Director of Staff, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, to the author, e-mail, 11 Feb 14.

[60] Riley, "Fulcrum of Air Force Identity," 87-88.

important factor, as Airmen embrace something like the "Airmen, Airpower, National Security" slogan and communicate to others both inside and outside the organization WHY we have a United States Air Force.

Task #3: Reduce Homogeneity in Senior Leader Positions and Build Better Internal and External Relationships

The Air Force must develop a strategic vision for engaging Airmen within the Service, as well as external stakeholders. Additionally, it must avoid homogeneity in developing senior leaders so that the multiple tribes in the Air Force are represented and the external stakeholders understand what airpower brings to the fight. As Lieutenant General Michael Moeller, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Programs notes, "the [Air Force] requires senior leaders with the operational credibility, intellectual capacity, moral courage, and inclusive leadership skills to achieve success."[61] The AFSCs of senior leaders should matter less than their ability to explain and implement airpower in the air, space, and cyberspace domains.

Air Force leaders must diversify in force development to avoid the homogeneity that can make an organization stagnant. As Diamond observes, the employment of like-minded people with like-minded goals can lead to the development of a defensive organization that fiercely resists change while further strengthening barriers between subcultures.[62] The absence of differences in personnel, i.e., mostly pilots in the top senior leader positions, can preclude organizational change and cause a homogeneity that does not accurately portray the identity of the Service and does not represent many of the different tribes. Currently, 66% of 3- and 4-star Air Force active duty generals are pilots,

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[61] Lt Gen Moeller, to the author, e-mail, 2 Mar 14.
[62] Diamond, *The Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 221-223.

while pilots make up only 22% of Air Force officers as a whole.[63] Any common organizational identity for the Air Force must paradoxically, but appropriately, show that the Service is made up of many different tribes and identities, though all contribute to airpower effectiveness in the three domains.

Leadership must also avoid homogeneity in promoting senior leaders because past practice solidifies tribal boundaries and allows a subculture to dominate the Service. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, ingroup bias grows substantially when a dominant group is allowed to occupy the seats of power, especially when this remains unchanged for a long period of time. The outgroup, in this case non-rated Air Force personnel, must do less well by nature in order for the rated personnel ingroup to succeed. This homogeneic environment perpetuates tribalism and establishes distinct fault lines where exclusivity advances those in the ingroup to the detriment of the Air Force. The situation is harmful to the organization. Personnel population changes demographically over time with regard to AFSCs are not reflected in the top leadership positions. Thus, Air Force leaders must diversify sensibly but systematically to ensure the Service does not become a victim of its own tribalization.

To counter homogeneity in the senior leadership positions, the Service must adopt truly the WHY as described above. Also, it must consider the idea that the most important thing, especially in the senior leader ranks, is that the emphasis should be on promoting Airmen who can execute airpower to enhance national security. While the vast majority of senior leaders interviewed in this research agree that AFSC should not matter at the most senior ranks, the current system of "accumulated advantage" as discussed in Chapter 3 results in pilots achieving the senior ranks in higher proportion numbers than do others.

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[63] Compiled from GO roster and Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) Service demographics. Of note, AFPC does not release data on O-6s, so the 22% number is considering only officers in grades O-1 through O-5.

The Air Force should adopt a personnel system that ties directly to the WHY of the Air Force, promoting senior leaders based on outstanding performance within their tribes AND the ability to think strategically across the three domains, enhancing the application of airpower to achieve national security outcomes. The principle should become one of reward based on contribution rather than reward based on AFSC.

The most practical way of implementing a system that promotes diversity across the Air Force tribes and develops a career path for Airmen in varied tribes to ascend to the highest leadership positions is similar to the steps proposed to move toward a common organizational identity—it must begin with enlisted and officer accessions. Implementation of a dedicated and well-resourced program to make all Airmen understand how their job relates to Air Force organizational outcomes, how this is the tie that binds across the tribes, and how the common cultural narrative means that all Airmen will have the potential to contribute importantly to airpower execution as a team will inculcate these beliefs in the future generation of leaders. Airmen must understand from the day they join the Air Force how they fit into the bigger picture. They must also be able to explain the WHY of the Air Force, regardless of their tribe. Changing the system to move away from occupationally focused development will take considerable effort from Air Force leaders, but the resulting communication among tribes and standardized education to all new Airmen will ensure that a common organizational identity is developed deliberately, while still maintaining the pride and expertise of tribes.

The heterogeneity in senior leaders that will result from these foundation-building actions is important because it will make the Service stronger, more inclusive of different tribal views, and will help create a healthier Air Force culture and external image. But for diversity in senior leadership to develop, it will take dedicated leaders who have the patience to develop the next generation of Airmen into cross-domain

leaders who understand the role of every Airmen in executing airpower for national security. This will require airminded learning leaders who openly question assumptions, a concept that will be specifically discussed in the next section.

The Air Force must build better internal relationships as a prerequisite to affecting positively its organizational identity. The internally oriented understanding, or culture, of the Air Force is one of multiple identities and different tribes.[64] This construct is acceptable in terms of technical expertise and performance, but in terms of cross-flow of ideas among members of different tribes it is lacking, contributing to overly dominant subcultures. The Air Force must improve its internal relationships by deliberately moving toward a common organizational identity in which something like "Airmen, Airpower, National Security" is a driving mantra that resonates with all Airmen, regardless of rank and tribe. The necessary steps of emphasizing organizational outcomes, a cultural narrative, and making sure all Airmen understand WHY the Service exists will lay the foundation for better internal relationships in the Service.

Specifically, the Air Force can break down the barriers between tribes and build better internal relationships by following the steps already proposed and providing greater opportunities for cross-flow of information among tribes. While the annual IdenT conferences examine basic assumptions and methods, and how they tie to organizational outcomes is a first step, leaders must engage proactively with all members of the force to break down the deindividuation that leads to a loss of individual identity.[65] Additionally, new models of existing forums must be utilized to improve internal relationships. While officer Developmental Teams (DTs) meet several times a year to discuss force

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[64] Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 991.
[65] Rupert Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 12.

development issues within a particular career field, leaders should also develop comprehensive IdenTs first within tribes and then moving towards inter-tribal meetings. The inter-tribal meetings (for example, a IdenT of rated personnel meeting with a IdenT composed of mission support personnel) must be organized so that the identity of each tribe is discussed and then specific culture attributes are explained. Table 4 outlines a proposed agenda of topics for such a meeting.

Table 5: Proposed Discussion Points for Inter-Tribal Identity Team (IdenT) Meeting

Rated IdenT	Mission Support IdenT
Combat warriors	Dedicated direct support
Largely officer force	Largely enlisted force
Technical flying expertise	Technical support expertise (maintenance, cyberspace, personnel policy, etc.)
Cultural Attributes: dominant AF culture, tip of the spear, directly in harm's way, occupy majority of highest leadership positions	Cultural Attributes: not the dominant culture though numbers are larger than Rated, the "tail" of the Service, usually not directly in harm's way, do not occupy majority of highest leadership positions

Source: Author's original work.

The current DTs consist only of Colonels (O-6s), but the new IdenTs examine basic assumptions in each career field and how they tie into organizational outcomes. They should consist of enlisted and officer members of varying ranks. Only through acceptance across the rank structure and strongly influencing accessions will these efforts develop better internal relationships within the Air Force. Robust internal relationships across the tribes, spurred by a robust structure of intra-

and inter-tribal meetings and groups, will enhance the Air Force culture. The end product of both intra- and inter-tribal IdenT meetings will be summaries of the meeting and issues discussed on the Air Force Portal or another Internet-based resource, to facilitate comments and discussion among Airmen. The enhanced culture that will result from these exchanges, per the Hatch model, will then reflect the cultural understandings of the Service better and allow Air Force identity to express itself more effectively to external stakeholders.

The Air Force must seek ways to better its external relationships with its major stakeholders. "Doubling up efforts" of internal and external communication will be critical in the future relevancy of the Air Force.[66] While many Air Force leaders have the "soft skills" necessary to engage with stakeholders, this must not be left to chance. Senior leaders must look within to the expertise already in the Service and make dedicated efforts to exploit it in relationships with government and civilian organizations. The future of the Air Force and possible development of a common organizational identity depends on an analysis of what the Service projects to outsiders, and how knowledgeable service members can project a robust image of American airpower.

The externally oriented understanding of the Air Force, its image, is slightly skewed as a result of diverged internal relationships. The Air Force must improve its external relationships with stakeholders because it has always presented a multiple identity image to them, dominated by the leading subculture at any given time. Leadership must harness the positive changes resulting from the improved internal relationships within the Air Force to present a more accurate picture of the Air Force's capabilities, a natural result of more cross-flow among tribes and greater heterogeneity in the senior leadership positions.

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[66] Lt Gen (ret) Newton, interview by the author, 26 Feb 14.

To build better external relationships with stakeholders, the Air Force should consider utilizing the "Airmen, Airpower, National Security" slogan as a centering tool in any discussion to always focus on the WHY of the Service's existence. Also, it must put forward a more assorted (reflecting multiple AFSCs) leadership group in order to project the various Service capabilities. As part of the "how" in building external stakeholder relationships, the Air Force must examine how it develops joint leaders, as the lack of Air Force representation in certain joint positions adversely affects the advocacy for airpower essential to the Service's remaining relevant.[67] As Barnes states, "Air Force and joint effectiveness at the operational and strategic levels of war depend, in part, on the Air Force's capacity to develop officers capable of filling joint leadership positions."[68] If the Air Force is not represented well in proportion to the other services in high-level joint positions—currently only 2 of 9 combatant commanders are Air Force officers[69]—it will be difficult to project a positive image of the Service in national strategy.

If the Air Force takes the necessary steps to improve internal relationships, the natural result will be a more varied group of senior Air Force leaders who can espouse the benefits of airpower in national security. These leaders will then represent the Air Force more effectively in joint positions.[70] Some measures that must be taken immediately include emphasizing joint service at promotion boards; placing both officers and enlisted Airmen in joint assignments earlier in their careers; and, most importantly, strengthening Air Force organizational identity. The Air Force must develop a process to cultivate Airmen competent in explaining airpower's role in the joint fight in all three domains. This education and knowledge must start at the accessions—waiting until an

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[67] For a detailed analysis of Air Force joint officer development, see Wiley Barnes, "A New Vector for Air Force Development of Joint Leaders" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, 2010).

[68] Barnes, "A New Vector," 3.

[69] Defense Department Leadership Biographies, http://www.defense.gov/bios/ (accessed 18 Apr 2014)

[70] Barnes outlines several of these recommendations and others in "A New Vector".

Airman attends his or her first professional military education (PME) school is too late.

An important first step in the process of building cross-domain leaders who present an accurate and comprehensive image of Air Force capabilities is making sure everyone knows their role in the mission of their squadron, group, and wing (or equivalent).[71] From this starting point, Airmen can continue to develop tactical expertise while developmental education programs, online or otherwise, teach them the effects of the Air Force in all three domains. This will produce Airmen who can better represent the Service to external stakeholders, improving external relationships and the Service's image.

Task #4: Develop Airminded Leaders and a Learning Organization to Sustain a Common Organizational Identity

As the Air Force considers developing a common organizational identity, it must look to the possibilities of affecting culture and image. As the Hatch model shows, identity expresses cultural understandings and mirrors the images of others.[72] To develop a common organizational identity, the Air Force must consider what it means to be an Airman. It must then build upon that core individual identity to develop a common thread that permeates the entire Service. While the Air Force is a multiple identity organization with many tribes, the leaders of the Service can start to build a common identity by going back to the basics, emphasizing WHY the Air Force exists and common organizational outcomes amongst tribes, and creating an airminded, learning organization led by learning leaders.

In considering the development of a common organizational identity, the Air Force must go back to its roots, remembering that, "the perspective of Airmen is necessarily different; it reflects a unique

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[71] Lt Gen (ret) Newton, interview by the author, 26 Feb 14.
[72] Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 991.

appreciation of airpower's potential....airmindedness entails thinking beyond two dimensions, into the dimensions of the vertical and dimension of time."[73] This airmindedness, a term coined by General Hap Arnold, "enables Airmen to think and act at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war, simultaneously if called for."[74] Though doctrine states these concepts and others as related to Airmen, it is questionable whether Airmen read the doctrine and embrace these principles. It will take dedicated leadership to build an airminded culture, and it will require even more aggressive guidance and follow-through to make airmindedness the tie that sustains a common organizational identity for the Air Force.

Air Force leadership can implement airmindedness throughout the Service by incorporating cross-domain thinking and the ability to move quickly between tactical, operational, and strategic objectives in all levels of PME, starting with BMT, OTS, ROTC, and USAFA. Leaders should ensure that Airmen in all tribes understand the WHY of the Air Force and how Airmen must think differently than members of the other military services. Fortunately, basic doctrine already emphasizes these attributes. Implementation of dedicated doctrine study is a positive first step in developing airmindedness in the Service.

The CSAF should change the Foreword in the Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1 to mandate reading and understanding of the material. Currently, the CSAF says regarding basic doctrine, "I *encourage* you to read it, discuss it, and apply it."[75] This should be contrasted with the United State Marine Corps approach, indicative of a service known for doctrinal devotion. In their basic doctrine document, *Warfighting*, the Commandant of the Marine Corps orders "I *expect* all Marines—enlisted

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[73] AFDD-1, *Basic Doctrine*, 18.
[74] AFDD-1, *Basic Doctrine*, 18.
[75] AFDD-1, 18 (emphasis added).

and commissioned—to read this book, understand it, and act upon it."[76] In the Marines, the result of this wording and emphasis is that Marine leaders regularly instruct members of all ranks in doctrine, a foundational step in the development of organizational identity.[77] The Air Force can put airmindedness at the forefront of institutional thought by expecting all Airmen to have knowledge of doctrine documents and the attributes of airmindedness outlined therein. Leaders must continually instruct their Airmen in the concept of airmindedness, tied to the WHY of the Air Force's existence. The result will be the full exploitation of airpower by airminded Airmen, emphasizing flexibility and utility.[78]

When the Air Force hones a fully airminded force, dedicated to decisive victory in air, space, and cyberspace, many indirect benefits will occur. First, focusing on thought processes dedicated to the "big picture" of airpower will break down occupationalism in the Air Force. Second, in developing cross-domain knowledge, best practices from operations in each domain can be shared. Finally, when Airmen begin to think across all domains at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, they will be better advocates for airpower and better representatives of the Air Force in the joint establishment. To become an airminded service with a dedicated cross-domain airpower focus does not, however, preclude the continuation of tribes.

Tribes and multiple identities can healthily exist when airmindedness becomes the sustaining attribute of a common organizational identity. Because of the technical nature of the Service, the technical depth of the tribes are needed to form the foundation of tactical expertise. Leaders will ask individual Airmen to understand how their particular specialty's duties relate to the other domains. To further

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[76] Marine Corps Doctrine Publication 1, *Warfighting* (Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps: Washington, DC, 1997), foreword.

[77] Personal observation of author during time as a student at USMC Command and Staff College in 2012-2013.

[78] AFDD-1, *Basic Doctrine*, 18.

inculcate Airmen in their role in the Air Force writ large, true airmindedness will require this dedicated step. The "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, Global Power" vision and its emphasis on Airmen finding their role in the Air Force's three core missions is useful as a start in making the move to an airminded culture—when Airmen know their role, they will be in a better position to study the other Service missions and focus areas.

When Air Force leaders ensure a program of airminded education is taking place through the training and education, and has acceptance from the Airmen through the newly developed career field IdenTs, the Air Force will begin to develop a common organizational identity of airmindedness. the direct tie-in to the WHY of the Service will make airmindedness a sustaining common identity for the Air Force. Through completion of the tasks outlined above, the minds of Airmen will become a weapon and airpower a mindset distinctive from that of the other Services.[79]

Intertwined and inseparable from the robust development of airmindedness is the necessity for the Air Force to become an adaptable learning organization with learning leaders. The Air Force, in its quest to remain a successful organization, must promote a concept of leadership that encourages deep thinking and adaptability among all Airmen.[80] Cultures are often stable and difficult to change, but there are ways in which organizations can deliberately develop adaptability and learning.[81] The Air Force must give its members the time and resources necessary for reflection and experimentation in a proactive learning environment, with leaders continually emphasizing the WHY of the Service and repeating something like the "Airmen, Airpower, National Security"

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[79] SAASS Class XXII, "Airmen, Airpower, and National Security," 12.
[80] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed., 418.
[81] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership,* 3rd ed., 393-394.

slogan in meetings, counseling, and through electronic media.[82] Furthermore, the change to a learning organization must be implemented through formal guidance from the CSAF, ensuring senior leaders are trained in the Schein concepts of a learning culture and learning leaders.

Additionally, outside organizational culture experts should train and equip Air Force leaders at all levels to understand learning organizations. Importantly, as the Air Force evolves into a learning organization, "what must be avoided…is the automatic assumption that wisdom and truth reside in any one source or method."[83] All tribes and all ranks must have input if the Air Force is to grow into a learning organization—a difficult proposition for any military hierarchy with its normally rigid protocols.

The tasks described above, inclusive of all ranks and tribes, must be incorporated formally in Air Force processes in order to make them a part of Air Force identity, breaking down protocols as needed for the sake of communication and continuous improvement. The multiple tribes of the Air Force have developed their own identities over time, and these should be embraced rather than marginalized. Proactive, innovative leaders who question the norms of the organization (known as "double-loop learning") must build a culture where questioning of authority is allowed and even encouraged.[84] Leaders must examine the culture, identity, and image of the Air Force and take these steps towards transformation since "the ability to foster and sustain an innovative culture in the Air Force is essential to its long-term institutional health and legitimacy."[85] An airminded learning culture led by learning leaders can be sustaining if implemented in a comprehensive manner with the tasks outlined above and with the formal backing of Air Force leaders.

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[82] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed., 396.
[83] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed., 398.
[84] Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 85.
[85] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 10.

Conclusion

As the Air Force moves toward a common organizational identity, it must bear in mind that revolutionary, abrupt identity changes can cause turmoil in any organization.[86] Thus, the proposed approach is critical to ensuring a managed, evolutionary change in organizational identity development. The CSAF changes every four years or so, and the changing mission and vision statements lead to communication inconsistencies. Thus the difficulties in developing a sustainable organizational identity sufficiently evolving to last through multiple leadership regimes presents a challenge. While a complete implementation of a common organizational identity like the Marines' "Every Marine a Rifleman" construct, may be nearly impossible for the Air Force, a managed, evolutionary glide path could alter the adverse aspects of tribal identities and make the Air Force more cohesive over time.

Importantly, the Air Force must not claim an identity change has taken place before members accept it. In order for the Air Force even to consider developing a common organizational identity, Service leaders must understand the needs of the force and what can be sustaining to members while not hindering mission effectiveness. When rapid transformations happen in organizations, workers can feel powerless and the institution can devolve into a conflicted identity organization.[87] Thus, the Air Force must carefully enact these planned changes while harnessing the positive aspects of the multiple tribes. The "core and anchor" of common organizational identity, determined here to be the commonality in organizational outcomes for all tribes in all missions, shoud not change once formally established.[88] First, it must examine basic assumptions within all Air Force tribes and tie these to the

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[86] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Barry A. Stein, and Todd J. Jick, *The Challenge of Organizational Change: How Companies Experience It and Leaders Guide It* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992), 221.

[87] Diamond, *Unconscious Life of Organizations*, 216-217.

[88] W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice*, 2d ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 282.

common organizational outcomes in all five missions. Next, the Service must take the WHY of Air Force existence and educate all Airmen in these tenets through a strategic communications campaign. Third, the Service must eliminate homogeneity in the senior leader positions. Looking inward and outward, the Service must then improve all of its relationships. Airmindedness across the force and a learning culture must be implemented as managed, evolutionary changes to the Air Force in order for these concepts to form the foundation of organizational identity.

The Air Force must focus sustaining a common organizational identity through airmindedness and a learning culture, even as leadership changes and mission and vision statements change every few years. Leaders must keep in mind that substantial changes in thought and processes can often take a generation to implement fully. Despite this sobering fact, the benefits and the long-range success derived from the approach of an airminded learning culture as a common organizational identity will make the United States Air Force credible and relevant for the foreseeable future.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Areas for Further Research

The United States Air Force is at a critical juncture in its history, and leaders must make an effort to alter the Service's organizational identity as it moves forward. It is clear from its history that, while the Air Force has been effective in combat, the Service has struggled with defining itself succinctly. The multiple tribes and mission areas, all contributing to "airpower" in it many forms, must be carefully cultivated so as not to create so great a disequilibrium that combat effectiveness decreases. The Air Force must engage in several different areas in the coming years to ensure progress and relevance within common organizational identity.

The first step in improving the Air Force and moving toward a common organizational identity will be the implementation of the four tasks outlined in Chapter 4. Having a common focus on organizational outcomes enmeshed in a defined cultural narrative will enable the formal processes presented to break down barriers between Air Force tribes. When all tribes are learning from one another through increased avenues of communication, the intangible benefits will spread throughout the Service. Though the tasks presented are an appropriate first step, they are only the first part of what should be a comprehensive review of Air Force processes and organization. A better sense of common organizational identity will allow these reviews to begin with a solid foundation and context.

In this chapter, I will examine four major areas directly related to organizational identity that Air Force leaders should study further and could be the focus of future studies by internal or external agencies. First, the Air Force must analyze its promotion and force development system, assessing whether the historical roots of the process still make

sense in a twenty-first century Air Force.[1] Next, research must be conducted regarding the technology and innovation focus of the Air Force—should the Air Force work more diligently to establish its core identity around being "the technology and innovation service"? Third, research should be conducted regarding the Air Force's organizational construct, analyzing whether the Service is structured according to its current and future priorities and patterned in congruence with a more effective organizational identity. Finally, and separate from the aforementioned analysis of the promotion system, the Air Force must conduct a thorough study of its Professional Military Education (PME) system and whether it is 1) Organized properly to develop officers for the Air Force of the future, and 2) Whether the PME system can be exploited to develop a better sense of common organizational identity for the Air Force.

Promotion and Force Development System

The Air Force promotion and force development system, which contributes greatly to the identity and image of the Service through creating senior Air Force leaders, requires a comprehensive evaluation, in conjunction with the tasks outlined in Chapter 4 that move the Air Force toward a common organizational identity. Leaders must investigate whether a system that has remained relatively since its inception still makes sense in the twenty-first century.[2] Some areas that should be considered in any research of the promotion system include whether or not pilots should be given primacy, particularly for Below the Promotion

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[1] For an analysis of the Air Force promotion system, and in particular the opportunities for Below the Promotion Zone (BPZ) selections for officers, see Timothy B. Missler, "A Service in Transition: Forging an Institutional Identity for the United States Air Force" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Air And Space Studies, 2010)

[2] For a detailed history and examination of the Air Force officer personnel system from in the first 30 years of the Air Force, see Vance O. Mitchell, *Air Force Officers: Personnel Policy Development, 1944-1974* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996), p. 20 (origins of pilot priority), 25 and 285 (line officer categorization), 65 (career field designations), and 343 (occupational specialty badges).

Zone (BPZ) promotions, and whether or not the designation of Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) and the category "Line of the Air Force" are appropriate in the modern Air Force. Additionally, leaders should examine career-field specialties in general, along with artifacts such as occupational specialty badges on uniforms.[3] All of these issues contribute to the Air Force identity and must be scrutinized for their worthiness particularly as the Air Force implements a manpower drawdown.

Further research is also needed into what an Air Force leader should be, know, and do with emphasis on command experience, education, strategic thinking ability, and tribal membership. Key to an analysis of the Air Force promotion system is identifying what attributes the twenty-first century Air Force desires in its future senior leaders. The research here emphasizes moving away from homogeneity in the senior ranks with regards to Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) in order to diversify the culture and image of the Service and more accurately reflect the composition of the force. Schein argues that when an organization devises an identity, managed evolution can take place through "a process of gradual and incremental change through systematic promotion of insiders whose own assumptions are better adapted to the new external realities."[4] The nature of the Air Force organization is that only insiders are promoted and there are almost zero opportunities for individuals to "transfer in."

Examining whether the Air Force needs to do more to promote strategic thinkers rather than or in addition to the most technically

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[3] The origins of these issues and policies are chronicled in Mitchell, *Air Force Officers* while the issue of modern BPZ promotions, in comparison to how the other Services manage officer promotions, is examined in Missler, "A Service in Transition."

[4] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 308-309.

competent individuals is also a project worthy of examination.[5] Leaders must study the promotion system from its historical origins to the present and make recommendations for possible changes to ensure the relevance of the Service and the quality of senior leaders. While this research focused on Air Force organizational identity as a whole, including force development as one area of interest, an independent project on the promotion system and force development construct will be useful after the Service implements the actions designed to develop better a common organizational identity.

Technology and Innovation

Technology and innovation have been key ingredients of Air Force organizational identity since the Service's beginning. Air Force Chief of Staff General Welsh believes that the Air Force must stay on the leading edge of technology, and that it is "the call to the future" that will make the Air Force successful in the coming decades.[6] Though the Air Force has been derided in the past for "worship[ping] at the altar of technology," the tendency towards technological modernization and innovation is worthy of a dedicated study within the construct of organizational identity.[7] Should the Air Force continue to push forward with a heavy emphasis on science and technology? An important investigation is necessary to ensure that the Air Force does not resist the implementation of technologies "that lie beyond [its] existing areas of technical expertise, and that either perform new missions or carry out

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[5] Jeffrey J. Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force: Tracing the Past, Shaping the Future* (Indiana University Press, 2014), 224

[6] General Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff, US Air Force (address, Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium, Orlando, FL 20 February 2014).

[7] Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 19.

existing ones in modern ways."[8] The WHY of the Air Force is tied directly to how it responds to the technological innovations of the enemy, and thus identity and innovation within the Service must correlate closely to ensure success.[9]

Furthermore, in conjunction with the move toward a more cohesive common organizational identity, a study of Air Force innovation and technological development must consider the environment for change. Are Air Force Airmen able to innovate and take new ideas through a process of acquisition and production? While the hope of the current CSAF is that "Every Airman [is] an Innovator," is there really an environment for a new General Bernard Schriever to arise?[10] Air Force leaders must also determine whether change is needed within the acquisition process, particularly as technology advances rapidly. Leadership should take heed of Schein's warning regarding "technological seduction" and must monitor technology's effects on values, beliefs, and assumptions in the identity of Airmen.[11] As the Service develops better a sense of common organizational identity, leadership must determine also the proper balance between mission accomplishment, technological advancement, and innovation.

Organization of the Force

As the Air Force considers how best to move toward a common organizational identity, it must review how it is functionally and hierarchically organized. The Service must do this to determine what organizational structure is best suited to utilize the talents of the

[8] Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 231, and Paul Noble Stockton, "Services and Civilians: Problems in the American Way of Developing Strategic Weaponry" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1986), pp. 5-6 and abstract.
[9] Rosen, *Winning the Next War*, 44.
[10] General Mark A. Welsh III, "Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power for America" (HQ USAF: 2013), 3. Also, see Thomas P. Hughes, *Rescuing Prometheus: Four Monumental Projects that Changed the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 69-140, and Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War: Bernard Schriever and the Ultimate Weapon* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).
[11] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d edition, 318.

multiple subcultures in the Service. This examination must start at the individual Airman and continue through the element, flight, squadron, group, wing, and beyond.[12] The tasks outlined in Chapter 4 should lay the groundwork for this analysis, as seeking out identity characteristics will lead to the best structuring of Airmen within particular units. Importantly, the Service as a whole must be analyzed to determine whether hierarchies and structures are arranged for the good of the Service in terms of technical means and mission accomplishment, or whether there are trends in which control measures are the driving factor in the organizational construct.[13]

Another important question that drives to the core of any study of Air Force organization is answering the question "Is the Air Force organized in the best way possible to execute its national security obligations?" Within this question, leaders must examine some important viewpoints, including what level of importance that should be placed on efficiency, cost-effectiveness and personnel proficiencies. Air Force leaders must attempt to develop a better organizational identity first before a major reorganization, as Airmen enculturated in a strong common identity will be able to better perform tasks, even unfamiliar ones, once there is a solidified context for all personnel.[14]

An imperative consideration in any study on Air Force organizational identity for the future is matching stated priorities with an organizational-structure analysis. A current example is the stated role of nuclear weapons as the "wall paper" of Air Force foundational capabilities and its position as a top priority of the Chairman of the Joint

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[12] For a recent study that recommends changes to the current Air Force structure, specifically the deactivation of major commands while enhancing the capabilities of numbered air forces, see Jeffery P. Sundberg, "A Case for Air Force Reorganization," *Air and Space Power Journal* 28, no. 2 (March-April 2013): 55-82, http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/digital/pdf/articles/Mar-Apr-2013/F-sundberg.pdf

[13] Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 171-172.

[14] Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 135-136.

Chiefs of Staff.[15] Despite these stated portrayals of the nuclear force, the Air Force Global Strike Command, the Air Force's top-level organization charged with the nuclear mission, has a lieutenant general in command, compared with other Air Force Major Commands with full generals in command. Researchers and Air Force leaders taking on the topic of Air Force organization for the future should examine whether the proper authorities are vested in the correct leadership positions, and that stated intentions and priorities are matched by a sound structure executing these same priorities. Furthermore, they must examine the products developed from the Identity Team (IdenT) process and determine from these how common organizational identity can be reflected best in the grouping of mission sets and authorities in the Service.

Professional Military Education (PME) System

Education is a pillar of competence for military members and must be constantly reviewed in order to ensure it is useful and correlates with the Service's organizational requirements.[16] In addition to and with a different focus than the proposed study on the Air Force promotion system, there should be a formal examination of Professional Military Education within the Service. While the Air Force has expanded greatly the opportunities for intermediate-level developmental education for officers in recent years, a robust study is needed to ensure both officers and enlisted members are being educated with the right materials at the right time.[17] This is especially true as the Service explores a common organizational identity. Training is important in a technical service like

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[15] General Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff, US Air Force (address, Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium, Orlando, FL, 20 February 2014). Also, see Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), 7.

[16] Colonel Dennis M., "The Three Pillars of Professional Competence: Imperatives for Airpower Leaders," in *Recapitalizing the Air Force Intellect: Essays on War, Airpower, and Military Education* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2008), 232.

[17] Bruce D. Callander, "Force Development Hits Its Stride," *Air Force Magazine*, October 2005, 69.

the Air Force, but the education system must be thoroughly studied to ensure training is built on a foundation of effective education.

A cursory look at Air Force educational requirements reveals that the standard is always changing, usually based on who the sitting CSAF is at any particular time.[18] A study of WHY certain PME and civilian education degrees should be required at different times in an Airmen's career would get to the heart of the issue. The study should use the tasks in Chapter 4 regarding organizational identity as a foundation, with the topic of education. When leaders more clearly define better a common organizational identity and tie individual Airmen actions to the common bond of organizational outcomes, it will be easier to identity the corresponding education levels needed for mission accomplishment. There is a possibility that different tribes may have different educational requirements; and through the technological venues available today, perhaps PME can be tailored more effectively to individual Airmen.

The current CSAF believes that part of what makes Airmen different is that they have a unique, innovative way of thinking. Institutions such as the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), which focuses on developing strategic thinkers, should be examined for any applicability to the force at large. While only a small number of officers attend SAASS, the foundational parts of the curriculum focusing on strategy and military theory may have some usefulness in educating the Air Force as a whole.[19] A study of the impact of SAASS graduates in the Air Force and a study on what parts of the SAASS curriculum may be applied to Air Force Airmen in other

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[18] Author personal experience. Gen Jumper (CSAF 2001-2005) did not emphasize master's degrees for officers. Gen Moseley (2005-2008) insisted officers should have master's degree before meeting their O-4 promotion board. Gen Welsh (2012-present) is pushing forward a requirement that officers should have a master's degree for promotion to O-6, but there will be no requirement to complete one before that. Additionally, recent a recent Personnel Service Delivery Memorandum (PSDM) forbids officers from completing distance learning PME if they have already been selected for in-residence schooling.

[19] For a concise review of SAASS and what it offers its graduates and the Air Force, see Stephen D. Chiabotti, "A Deeper Shade of Blue," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 49, (2d quarter 2008): 73-76, http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA518739

educational settings may be useful projects and could develop a common organizational identity of the Air Force as a "strategic thinking force."

Final Thoughts

The Airmen of the twenty-first century United States Air Force do not have a common organizational identity, but can move toward one through a strategy focused on self-diagnosis, policy development, and coherent action through formalized processes.[20] The diagnosis determined here is that the Air Force is a successful multiple-identity organization, but one that can benefit from better interaction among its different tribes. The proposed policy to develop a better sense of a common organizational identity is to have a better focus on the WHY of the Service's existence and the common cultural narrative shared by Airmen. The coherent action to achieve this is through formalized Identity Team (IdenT) processes to increase interaction between tribes, development of a refrain that allows Airmen to explain the WHY of the Service, and a robust education starting with the newest recruits that focuses on WHY the Air Force exists, how Airmen are different, and how to spread the message to both fellow Service members and external stakeholders. These actions will strengthen the culture of the Air Force and make the Service better able to develop its own organizational identity and the image it projects to outsiders.

From the individual Airman to the Service as a whole, the Air Force displays diverse attributes of individual, group, and organizational identity. Though Air Force Airmen do not share a common organizational identity, they have a common cultural narrative.[21] This narrative, when linked with the concept of airmindedness and the development of an innovative, learning organization construct could be sustaining and

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[20] See Richard P. Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Business, 2011)

[21] Paula G. Thornhill, "Over Not Through: The Search for a Strong, Unified Culture for America's Airmen" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Project Air Force, 2012), 1.

better address the needs of all service members in relating to a common focus. Airminded, learning leaders are the key to breaking down communication barriers between the tribes and building a common organizational identity for the Air Force.

As the Air Force moves forward, leadership must look inward and outward, from the past through the present and to the future in considering the issues of organizational identity. Airmen must know their "origin story"; they must also know what makes Airmen different than other military service members.[22] Importantly, Air Force leaders must continue to "beat the drum" in communicating the importance of the Air Force's critical missions.[23] Despite a current lack of common organizational identity due to occupational-based tribalism, Airmen must develop a common focus on the "desired ends of national security rather than the means" and move away from a concentration on weapon systems to one of capabilities and effects.[24] Thus, Airmen must focus on the airpower mission as a whole, regardless of platform. A reinvigorated education system and formalized cultural awareness will create a better team of Airmen in the Service, armed with a strategic focus on how airpower contributes to the joint fight.

While the Air Force must diagnose itself and develop a coherent action plan to move towards a common organizational idenity to remain relevant, *it is important to realize that the Air Force can continue to exist and succeed as a multiple identity organization.* In fact, as Schein observes, "the strength of the [organization] lies in the diversity of its subcultures."[25] Pride in tribal membership can be fruitful; and, as

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[22] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 11.
[23] Maj Gen Garrett Harencak (Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, Headquarters United States Air Force, Pentagon, Arlington, VA), interview by author, 20 February 2014.
[24] Jeffrey J. Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force,* 228.
[25] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 2d ed., 315.

General Welsh states, "there's room [for pride] in [the] Air Force."[26] The Service is not broken, it is a successful multiple-identity organization that must continue to improve. Improving as a Service means a thorough examination of personal, group, and organizational identity. Leaders must avoid organizational development stagnation in order to ensure the combat effectiveness and technological edge of the most capable Air Force in the world. Additionally, leaders must examine whether or not there is a need for constant adaptation and change, and that "change for the sake of change" does not affect combat readiness and mission focus.[27]

Finally, Air Force Airmen from the newest recruit to the Chief of Staff must continue to work toward a common understanding of what it means to be an Airman and what is the best way to define airpower. Airmen executing airpower across the three domains of air, space, and cyberspace constitute the core identity of the United States Air Force. In fact, simplifying the concept to one of airpower being a "single domain…consisting of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities" may be useful in uniting Airmen in a common effort focused on organizational outcomes.[28] The Air Force is a unique service with distinctive capabilities and exceptional people—harnessing the talents of these people, calling them Airmen with a capital "A," and uniting them in a common identity focused on airpower execution and mission accomplishment for national security goals is the challenge of Air Force leaders today and in the future.

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[26] General Mark A. Welsh III, Chief of Staff, US Air Force (address, Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium, Orlando, FL, 20 February 2014), 17.
[27] Thornhill, "Over Not Through," 11.
[28] Jeffrey J. Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*, 227.

Air Force Historical Periods

Source: Jeffrey Smith, *Tomorrow's Air Force*

Period I
(1907-1947)

Organization at Beginning of Period

Organization at End of Period

Culminating Point

Change Point

1907-1911
· First Army pilot
· First Amy aircraft
· Ground
· perspective

Core Culture: Ground-Operations

Core Culture: Bomber-Operations

1947
· U.S. Air Force Established
· Heavy Bomber perspective

Accumulation of changes ...

1907   1917   1927   1937   1947

1911-1915 Pre-war Org

1917-1919 WW I

1920-1933 Inner-War Years Part I

1933-1939 Inner-War Years Part II

1940-1945 WW II

1945 B-29 drops Nuclear Bomb

1947 Forward CSAF = Bomber Pilot

Period II

(1947-1992)

Organization at Beginning of Period

Organization at End of Period

Culminating Point

Change Point

1947
- Nuclear Age
- Cold War Emerging
- Heavy Bomber Perspective

Core Culture: Bomber-Operations

Core Culture: Fighter-Operations

1992
- SAC Abolished
- ACC Established
- Air to air Fighter perspective

Accumulation of changes ...

1947   1960   1970   1980   1992

1947 Forward
CSAF = Bomber Pilot

1950-1953 Korean War

1965-1973 Vietnam War

1986 Forward
CSAF = Fighter Pilot

1989 Fall of Soviet Union

1991 Gulf War

Period III

(1992-2030)

Organization at Beginning of Period

Organization at End of Period

Culminating Point

Change Point

1992
- Post Cold War
- U. S. Hegemony
- Fighter perspective

Core Culture: Fighters

Anticipated Future??

Core Culture: ???

2020--2030 ??
- ACC abolished?
- Digital/Cyber War?
- Asymmetric Threats?

Accumulation of changes ...

1992   2000   2011   2020   2030

1992-1993 Operation Restore Hope

Sept 2001 Terrorism

2001 to ?? Afghan/Iraq Wars

1999 Allied Force

Anticipated Region for Major Organizational Change

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